CONSTANCE:

A NOVEL.

THE FIRST LITERARY ATTEMPT OF

A YOUNG LADY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

——————— ON MY STRAIN
PERHAPS SOME COLD FASTIDIOUS JUDGE
CASTS A DISDAINFUL EYE, AND CALLS MY TOIL,
AND CALLS THE LOVE AND BEAUTY WHICH I SING
THE DREAM OF FOLLY. AKENSIDE.

VOLUME I.

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MDCCLXXXV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

To Mrs. ********* ******,

of ******,

AN EXAMPLE OF EVERY FEMALE VIRTUE

AND ELEGANCE,

THE FOLLOWING WORK

OF IMAGINATION, IS,

WITH GRATITUDE FOR HER FRIENDSHIP,

ESTEEM OF HER WORTH, AND

WISHES FOR HER HAPPINESS,

INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

WHO wrote Conſtance? is the utmoſt eulogium the author expects; and for this favour ſhould it be conferred on her, gratitude inclines her to make all prudent return by declaring the inutility of the enquiry. She may confidently ſay it is a ſecret not to be developed, yet thus far ſhall the curious be indulged. She is of a family who have ſerved and been eminently rewarded by their country; in a ſituation of life which renders ſolicitude for the morrow not only ſuperfluous but criminal; and of a diſpoſition to ſeek pleaſure in the receſſes of knowledge: ſhe is made more conſpicuous by her connections than by her own merit, and may venture to ſuppoſe that did ſhe avail herſelf of native advantages, a deſire to learn, whether literary endowments are hereditary, would ſupply the want of other attractives, and procure her the attention which ſhe has now no right to aſk.

PREFACE.

THAT the following compoſition was begun without the moſt diſtant view to its publication, that the author wants experience and judgment, and has not courage to face criticiſm, would be better reaſons for its ſuppreſſion than excuſe for its defects: ſuppreſſed it might probably have been, but for the encouragement of a friend, who, when a part of the manuſcript had been deſtroyed in deſpair of ſucceeding in the attempt, urged a re-commencement of it, and kindly fanned the almoſt extinguiſhed flame of emulation.

To undertake while conſcious of inability to perform, argues preſumption; but to offer incompetency as a claim to the extenſion of applauſe is folly: this work is therefore ſubmitted to the candor of its readers without apology; ſince thoſe, if any ſuch can be found, who think it not undeſerving of commendation will deſire none, thoſe who cenſure it will accept none.

But there is a ſpecies of merit to which it boldly pretends: it boaſts a tendency perfectly innoxious; it promulgates no doctrine that may not be received with advantage; it repreſents human life as diverſified with good and evil: it patroniſes no vice; it rewards virtue, and it inculcates a truth, which it were to be wiſhed abler pens would enforce, that

that a dominion over our paſſions is in all inſtances conducive to our happineſs.

Whether innocence or deſign, will be admitted in lieu of ſkill, whether it will compenſate for failure in the execution, remains to be proved. No projected ſchemes will be fruſtrated, ſhould it be rejected; no ambition will be diſappointed: obſcurity, the faithful friend of timidity, will ſhield the writer, whoſe deſires will be abundantly gratified, if her labours can render leſs tedious one hour of convaleſcence, deceive the duration of ſuſpenſe, or, which perhaps is a higher point than ſhe can aim at, ſhould they chear one diſciple of adverſity.

With reſpect to the work itſelf ſhe is aware that it has many blemiſhes; but ſhe will not pay the ſagacity of her readers ſo ill a compliment as to point them out: nor does ſhe think it neceſſary that ſhe ſhould acknowledge to whom ſhe is indebted for ſome poetical quotations, the writers from whom ſhe has borrowed them, being too well known to need naming.

However ſhe may have erred, ſhe truſts ſhe is exempt from the diſhoneſty of plagiariſm: a very confined acquaintance with ſimilar compoſitions may produce likeneſs as well as originality: but any deſign of that kind ſhe can with truth diſclaim, and will only refer ſuch as ſuſpect her to the obſervations of an ingenious annotator on Spencer, that paralleliſts often miſtake *reſemblances* for *theſts*.

To

To deny intended perſonality ſeems a neceſſary and almoſt unmeaning form; but whether it gains credit or is diſbelieved, an aſſurance that there is not a portrait in the work, and that ſhe would rather commit the whole to the flames, than give a moments uneaſineſs to any one, is due to ſociety in general, and a ſatisfaction to herſelf as an individual.

CONSTANCE.

CHAP. I.

RETIREMENT.

THE beginning of January was the time chosen by Sir Edward and Lady Barbara Fitzarthur, for their daughter to set out on her promised visit to her aunt, Mrs. Stavenell. All things were prepared for her leaving Marstonbury; she rose on the important morning with sensations of delight, to which she had hitherto been a stranger; and no music ever sounded so sweetly in Constance's ears, as the words which communicated the happy tidings that the chaise was ready.

She had entered her twenty-first year, aad had never yet slept out of the house where she was born; nor would she now have been suffered to leave home, but for the entreaties of Mrs. Stavenell, aided by her own wishes, and enforced by

the neceſſity, of which her father and mother were aware, that ſhe ſhould be in ſome meaſure acquainted with the world: theſe had prevailed on them to do violence to their parental affection, by ſubmiting to a temporary ſeparation from her in whom all their hopes centered, and to whom every care, every wiſh was directed.

Sir Edward Fitzarthur had in the early part of his life, been an actor on the buſy ſtage of politics: he had been employed in ſeveral very important embaſſies, but on a change in the miniſtry, being diſguſted with men and meaſures, and wearied by party feuds and ſucceſsleſs contention, he retired from court with a reſolution never to return to any ſhare in buſineſs, till thoſe whom he had ſupported were again in power. As remaining unemployed in a place where he had always appeared as a neceſſary member of the ſtate, was irkſome to him; he quitted London, and with a penſion of 2000l. a year, went to ſettle at Marſtonbury: here he, in a great degree, forgot the ſcene he had quitted; he turned his thoughts to the improvement and enlargement of his eſtate, re-built his houſe, and married Lady Barbara Beſworth, the ſiſter of the Earl of Drumferne.

The regret which, however it may be diſguiſed, there are few who do not feel, on an involuntary ſeceſſion from ſtate employments, in a few years ceaſed to give Sir Edward any uneaſineſs, and his marriage, and the birth of his daughter, effectually recon-

reconciled him to the part he had choſen: but retirement conſidered as productive of the pleaſures of leiſure, tranquillity, contemplation, books, and ſuch gratifications of the mind, was not what he choſe, or was fitted to enjoy: he had lived ſo long in ſplendor and magnificence, that nothing that did not deſerve thoſe appellations, pleaſed him: he re-built and furniſhed his houſe in a ſtile of ſuperior grandeur; he arranged his houſhold in a method ſimilar to that he had been accuſtomed to while acting as the repreſentative of a crowned head: thus, wanting nothing but the *emoluments* of his former poſts, he adhered to that way of living which is in itſelf uneaſy and cumberſome, and which is rendered to moſt minds ſtill more diſguſting by a forced familiarity.

This conduct excluded him from pleaſures which otherwiſe he might have enjoyed, and drew on him imputations which he did not deſerve. The greater part of the neighbouring gentry were awed by this grandeur; and the fear that in reciprocal invitations a diſplay of equal magnificence would be expected, determined them rather to forego all acquaintance with Sir Edward and Lady Barbara, than to ſubject themſelves to invidious compariſons. Content therefore to admire the blaze at a diſtance, theſe, from whoſe ſociety gratification might have been derived, were by prudential reaſons deterred from all connection, but ſtill they were inclined to wiſh this barrier thrown down. Others, who judged only from the firſt appearances, attributed this oſtentatious method of living to that which had no

part in it, pride; not conſidering that what we have been accuſtomed to, is in ſome inſtances the moſt agreeable to us, they immediately concluded, that it was aſſumed for the purpoſe of keeping them in awe, and to make them appear contemptible; but thoſe few whom either accident or former acquaintance admitted to intimacy, were ſoon convinced that all oſtentation was external, and that in Sir Edward and Lady Barbara Fitzarthur, they who were not ruled by their fears or their prejudices, might find all that a leſs exceptionable manner of living could have indicated.

Theſe, however, being in proportion to the diſcriminating part of the world, were few: ſo few as not to deprive Sir Edward's ſituation of the epithets of ſolitary and ſequeſtered; but this was not to him an evil of ſuch magnitude as others would have thought it: by his exalted ſituation while in office, he had been much excluded from general ſociety: there were in his neighbourhood none who could be ſtiled his equals; and his wiſhes for companions were never ſtrong enough to induce him to make overtures to ſuch as had nothing more to recommend them than the poſſeſſion of the family eſtate, or a large fortune acquired in trade.

A ſecluſion from the world ſo nearly total, few but Lady Barbara would have found agreeable; but to her it was ſo: ſhe had a mind, which was a never-failing ſource of amuſement and employment; and the education of her daughter,

ter, left her neither leiſure nor inclination to ſeek other pleaſures: ſhe ſaw the obſtacle which her huſband's manner of living was to all acquaintance with thoſe near them; and ſhe ſaw it with concern, becauſe ſhe well knew the inference which would be drawn from it to his diſadvantage; ſhe was therefore particularly cautious to avoid, in her own behaviour, every thing that could be conſtrued into *hauteur*; and though from this the natural goodneſs of her diſpoſition ever exempted her, yet ſhe, conſidering the predicament ſhe ſtood in, thought and found all ſhe could do, too little to ward off the ſuſpicion of pride from herſelf and Sir Edward, whoſe conduct, notwithſtanding in her heart ſhe diſapproved it, ſhe always endeavoured to vindicate on rational principles, but her good intentions had not the effect ſhe wiſhed; it was allowed that Lady Barbara was amiable, and the load of cenſure was increaſed on Sir Edward, as all his parade and ſhow was to gratify himſelf, if ſhe had no pleaſure in it.

Lady Barbara's eſteem and confidence reſted ſo implicitly on her huſband, that, allowing for this foible, which ſhe conſidered as the alloy inſeparable from humanity, he appeared to her a man without fault: and, notwithſtanding the inconveniences to which his mode of living ſubjected her, ſhe perſuaded herſelf it was the beſt for him, becauſe with leſs employment than his taſte found him, his time might have hung heavy, and he might have

wiſhed for a return to the ſcenes of buſineſs he had quitted. Satisfied that he would not ſuffer his fortune to be injured while he had leiſure to regard it, ſhe ſaw with pleaſure his eſtate daily improving in beauty, though a wiſh ſometimes roſe in her mind that the alterations he made, had been leſs expenſive.

In this ſituation, which by ſome would ſcarcely be thought to admit of exiſtence, Conſtance Matilda Fitzarthur was brought up, with a total inſenſibility to the misfortune of being deprived of thoſe pleaſures which are ſo eagerly purſued by almoſt all of her age, rank, and expectations: ſhe had never entertained a wiſh for which Marſtonbury was not the ſcene of action, till about two years before this period, when the tranquillity of her mind had received a ſhock from a viſit Mrs. Stavenell made to Sir Edward and Lady Barbara, in which ſhe extorted a promiſe that her niece ſhould ſoon be permitted to ſpend one winter with her in London.

Her ſecluſion from the world, had not rendered Conſtance unfit to accept this invitation: ſhe had been educated by a mother, very well qualified for the office, and had been inſtructed in every branch of knowledge proper for her ſex: the accompliſhments which may be termed the poliſh of education, ſhe acquired under the beſt maſters, who, at thoſe times when the deſertion of London afforded them leiſure and opportunity, were invited

to

to Marſtonbury to inſtruct her; but the formation of her morals, and the improvement of her rational facultics, Lady Barbara took on herſelf: ſhe taught her languages, ſhe infuſed into her a love of literature, and directed her attention to the beſt books; well knowing how neceſſary it is to fill up early that vacuum in the mind, which, if neglected, admits promiſcuouſly the torrents ever ready to burſt in on a young imagination. In all feminine elegance, Lady Barbara enforced precept by example; and ſhe had the happineſs of ſeeing her endeavours crowned with all the ſucceſs even maternal anxiety could wiſh. The pleaſure which the diſcharge of this arduous duty afforded her, was unallayed by any apprehenſions reſpecting her daughter's fate in the world: the path ſhe was to tread was marked out for her; and all Lady Barbara's endeavours tended, not to the making her a dazzling object of admiration, but to the improvement of her mind; to rendering her an agreeable companion, and to furniſh her with ſuch means of amuſement, as ſhould take away the neceſſity of, and even the inclination to the ſeeking abroad for means to ſpend time.

Lord Drumferne's eldeſt ſon, Lord Reycolm, had very early removed all Sir Edward and Lady Barbara's anxiety about eſtabliſhing their daughter in the world: he had given proofs of an attachment to his couſin, which were returned on her part, by the unreſtrained affection of a ſiſter: ſhe had not

been taught to diſguiſe her ſentiments; and as his character was ſuch as ſhe could not but eſteem, and the kindneſs he manifeſted towards her, demanded her gratitude, ſhe was never ſolicitous to conceal the pleaſure ſhe felt at ſeeing him, nor her ſorrow when his viſits ended: from theſe ſentiments of reciprocal regard their parents hoped an union of the honours and fortunes of both families would be productive of equal happineſs to both. Sir Edward's knowledge of the world, and the near connection ſubſiſting between them, induced lord Drumferne to follow his advice in the education of his ſon; but on one point they differed; Sir Edward inſiſted on the neceſſity of his going abroad, lord Drumferne thought the diſcipline of a public ſchool and the univerſity ſufficient; to which opinion he was biaſſed, not ſo much by the information of his judgment, as by this deſire to ſave the expence of his ſon's reſidence on the continent: his income was far from large, and ſo much had he heard of the extravagance of young men abroad, that he was very little inclined to truſt to his ſon's prudence: at length, however, fearing that he ſhould, by thwarting Sir Edward, loſe the advantage he expected from a match between lord Reycolm and Miſs Fitzarthur, he conſented; but it was on condition that his ſon ſhould travel only as Mr. Beſworth. When he was to ſet out the regret he felt at parting from Conſtance, left no room to doubt the ſincerity of his love for her; his father

then

then firſt mentioned it to him; he confeſſed it, declared it to Sir Edward, and a promiſe was interchanged between the couſins, that each ſhould remain unengaged till his return, which was now ſhortly expected.

CHAP. II.

NOVELTY.

THE time when what Conſtance had learned in theory was to be reduced to practice, was now arrived; and ſhe prepared to quit her native home with alacrity; but ſhe was ſoon convinced that the moſt ſupreme felicity of this world is alloyed, for at the moment of taking leave, ſhe would have relinquiſhed all the proſpect before her to have been ſpared the pain attending ſeparation: with many exhortations and bleſſings from her father and mother ſhe got into the chaiſe: the diſtance was forty two miles, and ſhe arrived at the place of her deſtination about four in the afternoon. The novelty of the ſcenes through which ſhe paſſed, and the hope of future pleaſure, leſſened the regret ſhe felt at leaving Marſtonbury, and when the chaiſe ſtopped at Mrs. Stavenell's ſhe flattered herſelf that all appearance of ſorrow was removed from her countenance; the reception ſhe met with from

her aunt tended to raiſe her ſpirits, for it was expreſſive of the ſincereſt joy at ſeeing her.

It was juſt dinner time when ſhe arrived, and Conſtance ſat down with Mrs. Stavenell alone, whoſe numberleſs interrogatories took away all fear of wanting converſation, and ſpared her niece the trouble of ſtarting any ſubject. She was ſufficiently acquainted with Mrs. Stavenell, by her having made two viſits of ſome length at Marſtonbury, to know what pleaſure her ſociety could afford her, and as ſhe had had very little opportunity of drawing parallels, ſhe could only judge that though ſhe abounded in good nature, and was of a very chearful diſpoſition, ſhe was far inferior in point of underſtanding and accompliſhments to lady Barbara.

Mrs. Stavenell was Sir Edward's only ſiſter, and had been in her youth a celebrated beauty; ſhe had married early, and had been left a widow with a very large jointure: in a ſhort time after the death of her firſt huſband, ſhe, by marrying Captain Stavenell of the navy, who was many years younger than herſelf, offended all her relations; and had ſhe not on his deceaſe made overtures of reconciliation, the breach between her and Sir Edward had probably never been healed. She had one ſon by the laſt marriage, a lieutenant in the navy, who was at this time in France, and expected to return ſoon, which inclined Mrs. Stavenell

venell to haſten to London in as ſhort a time as was convenient after her niece's arrival

As when Mrs. Stavenell was young, female education was not the faſhion, her mind was left in an uncultivated ſtate: her beauty had proved ſuch an attractive as rendered every other ſuperfluous, and ſhe had never found leiſure or inclination for any thing ſerious: her temper was eaſy, and while ſhe was ſuffered to enjoy her own purſuits ſhe allowed thoſe about her the ſame privilege. She was naturally inclined to think well of all, becauſe her powers of diſcrimination were confined, but her prejudices for and againſt were not to be eradicated. On the whole ſhe was what is generally termed a very good ſort of woman: ſhe liked gaiety, company, and cards; and with a degree of frankneſs peculiar to her, would own, that at the age of ſixty ſhe had not loſt any part of her reliſh for pleaſure: ſhe was fond of young people and careſſed by them: any lady of her acquaintance who wanted a chaperon to a place of public amuſement, might depend on Mrs. Stavenell, whom the requeſt gratified and the diverſion pleaſed. To many other good qualities ſhe added that of exerting herſelf to the utmoſt in the ſervice of her friends: in ſolicitation where ſhe was employed her perſeverance was unwearied, and ſhe thought nothing ſhe could do too much for thoſe ſhe loved; but this inclined her ſometimes to injuſtice, as in her endeavours to gratify her favourites, ſhe often injured thoſe who were more

deſerving. As good humour was her chief recommendation, much dignity, or that which could make her reſpectable, was not to be found in her: her preſence never awed thoſe whoſe converſation was too little reſtrained; ſhe would join in the laugh that diſtreſſed others; a want of delicacy and ſenſibility made her a leſs agreeable companion to perſons of elegant minds than ſhe would otherwiſe, with no greater endowments have been, and her prodigious and uncontrouled flow of ſpirits, drew on her ſometimes the imputation of vulgarity.

This lady was not the perſon lady Barbara Fitzarthur would have choſen to intruſt with the charge of introducing her daughter to the world, but ſhe had been ſo very importunate that a refuſal muſt have hazarded another rupture, which lady Barbara's ſpirit of peace made her ſolicitous to avoid. Mrs. Stavenell was very fond of Conſtance, her care of her was not therefore to be doubted; and no real danger could be apprehended from a compliance, as the connection between lord Reycolm and Miſs Fitzarthur was known to all their friends. Converſation filled up the evening of Conſtance's arrival, and ſhe was initiated in theory into the life ſhe was to lead: the next morning was devoted to preparations for their journey, the following day was that on which they were to ſet out, and ſhe heard with pleaſure that they were to be accompanied to town by a gentleman and his two ſiſters, who were expected to dine that day at Mrs.

Stavenell's

Stavenell's, to ſleep at her houſe, and to ſet off with them in the morning. As ſoon as her aſſiſtance was no longer neceſſary to Mrs. Stavenell, ſhe went to put herſelf in order for the reception of theſe ſtrangers to her; and as dreſſing on the eve of a journey would have been very inconvenient, her aunt promiſed to make an excuſe for her appearing in her habit, an indecorum to which Conſtance could not reconcile herſelf, though told that the ladies would not ſtand on ceremony.

The company expected were Lord Farnford, Lady Maria, and Lady Emma Peryton his ſiſters; before Conſtance could return to Mrs. Stavenell they came, and, with a diffident timidity which dyed her cheeks, ſhe, as ſoon as ſhe was ready, went into the drawing room, and was introduced to them.

The earl was about twenty-eight years of age: he had loſt his father when he was very young; and his mother at her death, which happened but a few years after, left the care of him and his ſiſters to Mrs. Stavenell's firſt huſband; the whole of this truſt, had in a few months, devolved on Mrs. Stavenell, and ſhe executed it with a degree of fidelity that did her honour. The plan of Lord Farnford's education had been ſettled by his father, in order to relieve his widow of the laborious taſk of marking out the path he ſhould purſue: he was brought up under private tutors till he was of a

proper age to go to the univerſity, and from the univerſity he ſet out on a tour to the continent, from whence he returned at the time that the management of his eſtate, which had accumulated during his minority to the annual income of 25,000l. was remitted by his guardians to himſelf.

As Lord Farnford was an only ſon, he had been humoured while his parents lived, and when he came under the care of Mrs. Stavenell he was regarded as an orphan, whoſe immediate gratification ought, from motives of compaſſion to him, and friendſhip for his parents, to be ſtudied. His temper was naturally good, but his paſſions violent, and as they never met with, they could not bear controul: he imagined that his title and fortune would always ſecure to him that ſubmiſſion from others which exceſſive indulgence had made neceſſary to his happineſs, and he had ſeldom found himſelf miſtaken: in intellectual endowments nature had been very liberal to him, but as in his ſtudies he had no competitor till his habits were fixed, emulation was ſuffered to expire without producing any of its good conſequences, and his indiſpoſition to ſubmit to authority, ſtrengthened by a love of pleaſure, made him contented to fall ſhort of excellence: when ſtimulated, he would ſometimes diſplay talents which he was not known to poſſeſs, but theſe exertions were tranſient; and ſatisfied with convincing the world that he had abilities if he

he choſe to employ them, he directed his attention ſolely to procuring for himſelf thoſe pleaſures which the flattery and adulation he had ever been accuſtomed to made him regard as his peculiar property. Thus a warmth of temper, which, if properly governed and directed, might have produced the nobleſt effects and rendered its poſſeſſor an ornament to his rank and country, was made criminal by miſapplication and indulgence, and an underſtanding, which might have benefited mankind in general, was degraded to the low purpoſes of cunning and circumvention.

His perſon was more than commonly good, his addreſs and manners inſinuating, and uniformly proportioned, either to the opinion he wiſhed others to entertain of him, or their abilities to ſerve him. In a mixed aſſembly he was polite, eaſy, and attentive to etiquette; every lady heard him with pleaſure, and every gentleman conſidered him as the ſtandard of elegance in dreſs and deportment: in a ſmall party or a tête à tête he was whatever thoſe he converſed with wiſhed him, he had ſufficient literature to preſerve him from contempt among the learned; he could make himſelf acceptable to men of genius; with the diſſipated he was always well received; the firſt to propoſe, the moſt eager to purſue, and the laſt to quit pleaſure; but with theſe he always maintained a ſuperiority which entitled him to their reſpect, and which in all competitions inclined them to yield

yield to him. He was never without ſome ſcheme in agitation, and he ſeldom failed of carrying the point he aimed at, though he occaſionnally paid more for his gratifications than by others they were thought worth; but nothing was too great a price to ſave him from diſappointment: a natural ſhare of pride kept his eſtate unincumbered, as he feared a decreaſe of his fortune might leſſen his importance in the world, and, as his income was enough to ſatisfy even *his* wiſhes, that he did not exceed it, could ſcarcely be called forbearance.

Lady Maria was two years older than her brother: thoſe who were intimate with her knew her to have a very fine underſtanding and a very amiable mind: but there was nothing about her to attract attention.

Lady Emma, who was twenty-ſix years of age, was in her appearance captivating; a brilliant complexion, dark eyes, and ſpeaking features were rendered ſtill more pleaſing by a natural complacent ſmile: her figure was light and elegant; ſhe exerciſed the privilege of beauty, and indulged a ſingular, though, to her, perfectly becoming taſte in what ſhe wore; ſhe poſſeſſed a wonderful ſhare of vivacity, and had ſo amiable an appearance, that Conſtance, whoſe acquaintance with variety of perſon was very ſmall, thought her the moſt beautiful creature ſhe had ever ſeen.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

STARING.

IT was evident that the company had been previouſly informed whom they were to ſee: Conſtance was received by them with much civility, and the awkwardneſſes of a firſt interview were ſoon overcome: ſhe was much pleaſed with the ſprightlineſs of the converſation between Lord Farnford, Lady Emma, and Mrs. Stavenell; but was concerned to ſee that Lady Maria, who had taken out her netting, bore a very ſmall ſhare in it, becauſe from that little ſhe did ſay it ſeemed in her power to entertain.

A ſummons to dinner ſoon made them all riſe, and when they were going out of the room, Mrs. Stavenell ſaying ſhe would follow, lady Maria went firſt, and Conſtance retreated to let lady Emma paſs; but ſhe, taking her hand and deſiring there might be no ceremony between them, led her out of the room, and by the eaſy politeneſs of her behaviour confirmed the good opinion which the firſt ſight of her had induced. Mrs. Stavenell and Lord Farnford followed them immediately, and Conſtance heard her aunt ſay in a whiſper, Well what do you think of her? To which lord Farnford anſwered with an oath—She is the loveliest

woman

woman I ever beheld. When does lord Reycolm come over? The firſt queſtion diſconcerted Conſtance, but the anſwer ſhocked her: unaccuſtomed as ſhe was to hear any but the ſimpleſt language, ſuch an aſſeveration as Lord Farnford uſed made her involuntarily ſtart: Lady Emma perceived it, but did not gueſs the cauſe; the loud laugh which Lord Farnford's queſtion excited in Mrs. Stavenell attracted her notice, and an inquiry what was the matter gave Conſtance time to recover.

The ſubjects of the converſation at dinner were ſuch as ſhe was wholly unacquainted with: Lord Farnford, whoſe eyes were ſo fixed on her that ſhe hardly dared to raiſe her head, perceiving that ſhe was excluded from it, ſaid—It is not fair that we ſhould talk of perſons and things of which Miſs Fitzarthur cannot be ſuppoſed to have any knowledge of yet: pray Mrs. Stavenell, do not let us puniſh ourſelves by keeping her ſilent.—I hope, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, ſhe will ſoon be able to talk with us, and that you will all be very well acquainted: I muſt have you all Friends. Lord Farnford now turned the diſcourſe to thoſe topics on which he ſuppoſed Conſtance to be informed: as he lived within thirty miles of Marſtonbury, ſome few perſons were known to both; and muſic, new books, &c. furniſhed matter for general converſation, and convinced thoſe preſent that ruſticity of manners, or ignorance of polite accompliſhments does

does not neceſſarily follow from an education a hundred and thirty miles from the metropolis.

Some time after the cloth was removed, Lord Farnford, with a ſmile that indicated ſome pleaſing thought, roſe, and coming behind Mrs. Stavenell's chair, whiſpered her: to what he ſaid ſhe anſwered —I will as ſoon as I have an opportunity—and he returned to his ſeat. What miſchief are you meditating now? ſaid Lady Emma to him.—None replied Lord Farnford; why ſhould you ſuſpect me?—Becauſe you look miſchievous, ſaid ſhe, I am ſure you have ſomething in your head. After a ſilence of a few minutes, Mrs. Stavenell, looking at Lord Farnford, ſaid, pray Lady Emma, when did you ſee Lord Calorne? Vexation ſpread itſelf over Lady Emma's countenance; and the laugh which her brother could not ſuppreſs proved that he had prompted Mrs. Stavenell to aſk this queſtion, which, for what reaſon, Conſtance could not diſcover, had diſturbed lady Emma: inſtead of anſwering Mrs. Stavenell, ſhe ſaid to him—Now ſir, I know what your ſcheme was, I thought there was ſome miſchief; but, checking herſelf as if fearful of ſaying too much, ſhe ſtopped, and Lord Farnford ſaid—But why do you not anſwer Mrs. Stavenell's queſtion? come poor thing I will ſpeak for her. Lady Emma attempted to ſtop him, and Lady Maria joined her in deſiring he would deſiſt; but he would not liſten to them, and ſaid—Why you muſt know, madam, that

that Calorne and Emma have had a moſt ſhocking quarrel: and ſhe has revenged it on herſelf by refuſing an invitation to dance where ſhe thought ſhe ſhould meet him. This excited Mrs. Stavenell's wonder and curioſity; ſhe deſired to know the cauſe of offence, and Lord Farnford, with a degree of formality calculated to render it ſtill more ridiculous, informed her that Lord Calorne, hearing ſomebody congratulate Lady Emma on the recovery of her looks immediately after a ſevere illneſs, had ſaid to a third perſon that he was very ſorry to ſee her look ſo well; that on being aſked his reaſon, he had replied, that he always thought it a bad ſign when the countenance was not affected by ſickneſs, and that in her caſe it was particularly alarming, as it had convinced him of that which he had believed impoſſible, that for the appearance of redundant health ſhe was indebted to the induſtry and ingenuity of her own hands.

This anecdote Lady Emma endeavoured to contradict but her inability to do it and the diſorder apparent in her countenance witneſſed it a fact too forcibly, and an allowance from Lord Farnford, that though this was ſubſtantially the truth, he might not be quite correct, was all ſhe could obtain from him: the laugh was now againſt Lady Emma, whom this ſtory had much lowered in the opinion of Conſtance: ſhe had heard of the practice of painting, but imagined it was not adopted by reſpectable people. That Lord Calorne, with whom

whom ſhe had been acquainted ſome years before, ſhould expreſs his cenſure ſo pointedly, argued that it was diſapproved by men of ſenſe: why then was it done? She pitied Lady Emma's diſtreſs, and ſecretly blamed her brother for expoſing her, but her contempt roſe at the deceit.

A quadrille table was formed to diſpoſe of part of the evening, and total ignorance of the game obtained for Conſtance the privilege of being a ſpectator; ſhe ſat by Mrs. Stavenell, and being warned that ſhe muſt learn to play, endeavoured by attention to acquire ſome inſight into the buſineſs they were engaged in: Lord Farnford ſat on the oppoſite ſide of the table, and was frequently blamed for very bad play: at laſt Mrs. Stavenell hitting the table ſuch a blow as made Conſtance ſtart, ſaid in a tone of anger—Upon my life, my lord, if you do ſo I'll order a ſcreen to be ſet here, and then you will mind your cards, you have loſt the vole, and I had it ſure. This reproof was unintelligible to Conſtance; Lord Farnford underſtood it, and promiſed amendment. Preſently after, making ſome other egregious blunder, Mrs. Stavenell ſaid to Conſtance—My dear, go to the other ſide, and ſet your chair a little behind my lords, and look over his hand; for he minds nothing while you ſit here. Exceſſively diſconcerted at finding that it was ſhe who had drawn Lord Farnford's attention from his cards, ſhe was riſing to obey Mrs. Stavenell, when he again

promiſing

promiſing that he would not offend, and begging her pardon for his rudeneſs, her aunt bid her keep her ſeat. But her ſituation was now become very uncomfortable: the conſciouſneſs that ſhe was a particular object of Lord Farnford's attention embarraſſed her: Lady Maria, however, very kindly endeavoured, by intereſting her in her ſucceſs, to relieve her, and as his lordſhip kept his promiſe, ſhe had nothing more to complain of than wearineſs.

Supper was ordered at an early hour, and the family retired to reſt ſooner than ordinary, to fortify themſelves againſt the fatigue of the journey: the three young ladies went up ſtairs together, followed by a French woman who waited on Lady Maria and Lady Emma, and a maid ſervant of Mrs. Stavenell's who was to attend Miſs Fitzarthur. They took leave of each other, and went into two adjoining rooms.

So little art was employed in Conſtance's dreſs, that ſhe, in a few minutes, diſmiſſed her attendant: Lady Maria and her ſiſter were yet up, and the converſation was ſo loud that ſhe could not avoid overhearing it: ſhe heard Lady Emma aſk the French-woman what ſhe thought of Miſs Fitzarthur, and her anſwer in broken Engliſh—The young lady be very handſome, ſure, but,—But what, ſaid Lady Emma, in a tone that beſpoke impatience. I would ſay, replied the woman, as mademoiſelle be not ſo beautiful as your lady-

ſhip.

ſhip.—No, ſaid Lady Emma; well to be ſure you are the beſt judge, but ſhe is certainly very pretty.—And do you think, ſaid Lady Maria, that Emma is handſomer than Miſs Fitzarthur?—Oh yes, replied Lady Emma's panegyriſt, Lady Emma be very beautiful.—But ſaid Lady Maria, do you mean Lady Emma in the morning, or Lady Emma when ſhe is finiſhed for the evening.—Oh, Lady Emma at all times, anſwered the obſequious Françoiſe, her ladyſhip have ſo much vif in her eyes, ſuch a ſmile—Mercy on me, ſaid Lady Maria, how can you, Emma, ſuffer any body to flatter you ſo groſely, and look pleaſant at it!—I ſuppoſe, anſwered Lady Emma, that Minotte only ſays what ſhe thinks, and I wanted to know her opinion. But, ſaid Lady Maria, I ſhould immediately have diſcovered that her opinion was not worth having when ſhe could make ſuch a ſacrifice. What ſacrifice? returned Lady Emma. I ſhall vex you, ſaid her ſiſter, if I ſay any more.—You will not indeed, anſwered Lady Emma, you cannot put me out of humour. Why is it not a ſacrifice of truth, my dear Emma, ſaid Lady Maria, to ſay that Miſs Fitzarthur, to whom nature has been ſo uncommonly laviſh of her favours, is inferior to you in beauty?—Could any impartial perſon ſay ſo? Or can you yourſelf believe it? You ſee Miſs Fitzarthur as ſhe really is, and without the common aids of dreſs, and you and I think very differently if you imagine you ever ſaw a prettier woman; but, allowing Minotte

to

to err in *judgment*, how can you let her *ſay* ſuch things?—I proteſt were I you, (for as I am, you will ſay, I am in no danger of being flattered) I would not ſuffer her to open her lips to me in praiſe of any thing farther than the dreſſing of my head, or the faſhion of my gown. Conſtance heard the French-woman, with an affected laugh, reply, Lady Maria be always ſo grave. Lady Emma ſaid little more till ſhe and her ſiſter were left by themſelves: then ſhe began to complain of Lady Maria's unkindneſs, ſaying, that if Minotte was not very well bred, Lady Maria's ſpeeches was ſufficient to encourage her to be very ſaucy.—Surely not, ſaid Lady Maria, I think if they have any effect they muſt tend rather to repreſs her forwardneſs; but then why will you ſubject yourſelf to ſuch mortifications?—I ſee, anſwered Lady Emma, that you are determined no body ſhall like me—and my brother to night!—how could he be ſo cruel as to expoſe me in the manner he did? It was done only to mortify me. I am ſorry for it, indeed, ſaid lady Maria mildly, and in my own heart I blamed him very much, but even this is your own fault: but this is a ſubject long ago worn thread-bare, do not let us loſe the time when we ſhould ſleep in ſuch repetition, I dare ſay we ſhall be ſufficiently tired with to-morrow's journey, ſo I wiſh you a good night. Lady Emma's inclination to complain of the ill treatment ſhe received was too ſtrong to be eaſily repreſſed, and her ſiſter was

obliged

obliged to ſilence her by perſevering in her reſolution to ſay no more.

This converſation had elevated Conſtance's opinion of lady Maria, in proportion as it depreſſed that ſhe had imbibed of lady Emma: ſhe had been caught by the external appearance of the latter, and no very favourable ideas had been excited by that of the former: pleaſed with having her opinion of the one improved, and vexed at being deceived in the judgment ſhe had formed of the other, ſhe wiſhed for a further opportunity of developing the characters of the ſiſters, and betook herſelf to reſt, of which ſhe imagined ſhe ſhould ſtand in great need during ſo long a journey as one of ninety-five miles appeared to her.

CHAP. IV.

LOQUACITY.

BEFORE Conſtance was quite ready to make her appearance the next morning, lady Emma came to her door, and having obtained admittance, ſhe again won on her by the ſame affability and ſweetneſs of behaviour, which had ſo prejudiced her in her favour the day before; ſhe found her ladyſhip's viſit was the conſequence of apprehenſion that ſhe had heard what had paſſed after they had

parted at night, and that her ſpeaking ſo incautiouſly aroſe from ignorance of Miſs Fitzarthur's occupying the adjoining room: as lady Emma could not, without aſking directly whether ſhe had been overheard, get at the information ſhe wanted, Conſtance could eaſily avoid confeſſing by anſwering her expreſſions of concern, leſt ſhe and her ſiſter had diſturbed her, by aſſurances that they had not: lady Emma ſeemed ſatisfied, and they went down together to the breakfaſt table, where they found Mrs. Stavenell, Lord Farnford, and lady Maria.

After the ceremonies and inquiries incidental to a firſt meeting in the morning, the plan of their journey was diſcuſſed: it had been ſettled that Lord Farnford's coach ſhould take Mrs. Stavenell, Lady Maria Peryton, and Miſs Fitzarthur; Lord Farnford was to drive lady Emma in the phaeton, and Mrs Stavenell's coach was to be filled with ſuch ſervants as it was neceſſary ſhould travel with them: as they went with their own horſes, and the days were almoſt at the ſhorteſt, it was agreed that they ſhould ſleep two nights on the road; the firſt days journey was to be the longeſt, and they hoped to reach Mrs Stavenell's houſe in Spring-garden in the forenoon of the third day: this ſcheme had been ſettled before, but Lord Farnford now, going to the window, ſaid to lady Emma—I am almoſt afraid to venture in the phaeton, for though it looks ſo fine now, I think the weather will

will change; we may poſſibly have ſnow.—How can you think ſo replied lady Emma, it freezes very hard, and the air is clear; there is no appearance of change of weather.—Well, ſaid her brother, I do not care to venture—It is not ſo hot as to make riding five in the coach uncomfortable; one of the men ſhall drive the chaiſe.—Mrs Stavenell, will you let us in?—Not I indeed, anſwered Mrs. Stavenell, you are not afraid of weather.—I am ſure you have drove in rain and ſnow more than we ſhall have to day—if Lady Emma is afraid ſhe ſhall go with us—but I vow you ſhall not—no, no, my lord, I am too cunning for you, don't think to catch old birds with chaff—I know what makes you want to go with us. I proteſt, ſaid Lord Farnford, I think it will ſnow, and it is exceſſively cold—Emma, how do you think you can bear it?—Oh very well, replied her ladyſhip, with a malicious ſmile, I am not at all afraid—I beg we may go in the phaeton.—Then do be ſo obliging, ſaid he, as to give me ſome of your enamel for my face; for really I am afraid it will be quite flayed before we get to town.—By this ſarcaſtic requeſt Lord Farnford revenged himſelf on his ſiſter for preferring the phaeton, by chuſing which ſhe had intended to mortify him, well knowing that Miſs Fitzarthur was the attractive that made him incline to going in the coach.

Matters were again ſettled in their former train; and the travellers ſet out in the order propoſed.

All was new to Conſtance, and, the weather favouring them, notwithſtanding the time of the year was not ſuch as to diſplay the beauties of the country, all was delightful to her: Mrs. Stavenell was buſy in pointing out to her the various objects, and, ſeeming to derive much pleaſure from that which the journey afforded her niece, told her the names of the ſeveral perſons to whom the principal eſtates and houſes belonged; ſtated their pedigrees, alliances, and incomes with accuracy; and related the particulars of their hiſtories: at firſt Conſtance was amuſed with this; but it ſoon grew tireſome, and ſhe could not forbear wiſhing that the converſation had been of ſuch a kind as Lady Maria would have joined in, who for the firſt three hours had ſaid little more than to ſet Mrs. Stavenell's errors right, or to give her ſuch information as ſhe required to fill up the chaſms which any failure of memory occaſioned in her biography: but Conſtance who wiſhed to relieve Lady Maria from a ſilence which Mrs. Stavenell's volubility had in effect impoſed on her, addreſſing herſelf to her, began to talk to her, and the converſation was juſt growing agreeable, when it was interrupted by Mrs. Stavenell, who laying violently hold of her niece's arm, and directing her eyes to the left ſide of the road—Do you ſee, ſaid ſhe, an old white houſe there, with a great many chimneys?—Yes madam, I do, it is to the right of the church—Yes, ſo it is: well that houſe belongs to a baro-knight, that was, you ſee, an humble

humble ſervant of mine when I was young; and many a merry day have I ſpent there; but I muſt tell you ſomething exceſſive comical about him:—it was the drolleſt thing to be ſure!—He hardly ever uſed to come to London; but howſ'-ever it happened that he comes up to town the winter as I was married to my firſt huſband—poor dear ſoul!—ſo I, with a whole parcel of young ones like myſelf, was at Ranelagh, and who ſhould come in but this gentleman—I put myſelf o'purpoſe in the way, and up he comes, bowing, and ſimpering, and hoping as I was well, and ſo forth; and ſo after a few compliments—I ſhould tell you I left my company and walked, you ſee, along with him; he began a talking in the old ſtyle about my cruelty, and when I would make him happy, and ſo on.—I was ready to burſt with laughing, I thought I ſhould have died, for I found he didn't know a ſyllable about my being married—So I lets him run on, and we walked on, and talked about people we knowed; at laſt I coudn't hold out a bit longer, and I ſays, when he axed me about ſome lady, that I hadn't ſeen for a great while, that I had never laid my eyes on her ſince I was married—poor Sir Thomas! how he did ſtare! juſt for all the world as if he had been ſtuck:—I burſt out a laughing in his face: poor ſoul! he had not a word to throw at a dog—and ſo we walks up to our company again.

Mrs. Stavenell was ſo much diverted at the repetition of this ſtory, that ſhe did not perceive its want of effect on her auditory: it excited only a ſmile on the countenance of her niece, and Lady Maria remained unmoved by it: her fit of laughter juſt ſubſided in time for her to point out to Conſtance's obſervation another houſe, about which ſhe had ſomething *very comical* to tell her: Lady Maria inclined forward to look at the houſe, and while Mrs. Stavenell put her head out at the coach window, to be ſure ſhe was not miſtaken, ſaid in a whiſper—Now for the ſtory of the running away: I know the appendage to every houſe on the road.—Conſtance was obliged to ſtifle a laugh; for Mrs. Stavenell, having ſettled the geography of the place, and the bearings of the ſeveral objects, had again ſeated herſelf. And now began a circumſtantial narrative of the elopement of a young lady with whom ſhe had formerly been intimate.

Happy was it for Mrs. Stavenell's hearers when the ſtory concluded.

Conſtance was ſo heartily wearied that ſhe determined to give no more encouragement to her aunt's loquacity by aſking queſtions; but, addreſſing herſelf again to Lady Maria, ſhe began to talk on ſuch ſubjects as ſhe thought Mrs. Stavenell would not engroſs: profeſſing her ignorance of the life into which ſhe was to be initiated, ſhe endeavoured to gain ſome information reſpecting its various employments,

ployments, and amuſements: ſhe found Lady Maria both able and inclined to anſwer her queſtions; but Mrs. Stavenell's interpoſitions were ſo frequent, that, had not her perſeverance been encouraged by the evidences of Conſtance's wearineſs in liſtening to unintereſting relations, the converſation would again have been warped to its former courſe.

Lord Farnford and Lady Emma had got into the inn where they were to dine, a little before the coach arrived: he was ready to receive the ladies, and having handed Mrs. Stavenell and his ſiſter out of the carriage, he took Conſtance's hand, and not quitting it till they reached the room where they were to dine, he, with a degree of earneſtneſs, and a particularity of behaviour which diſtreſſed her, expreſſed his fears that the journey muſt already have very much fatigued her: juſt at the door of the room Mrs. Stavenell turned round, and ſeeing Lord Farnford holding her niece's hand while her eyes were riveted to the ground, and her face covered with crimſon, ſhe exclaimed:—Hey day! what's here? well, my lord, if I had gueſſed as much, I would have ſent my niece firſt: then retreating, and bidding Conſtance paſs her, ſhe called Lord Farnford to her, and went out with him. In a few minutes ſhe returned, and it was evident ſhe had been talking more ſeriouſly than was uſual with her.

It wanted near an hour of dinner time, and as the weather was, though cold, fine, Lord Farnford propoſed to the ladies a walk about the town: this no one objected to, and they ſet out. Conſtance determined to keep cloſe to Mrs. Stavenell, but Lord Farnford joining her, ſhe told her niece to walk with the two ladies who were a little before them: after a few minutes converſation between Mrs. Stavenell and Lord Farnford, he quitted her, and took Lady Maria from her party; Lady Emma and Conſtance then remained together: the journey was the ſubject of their converſation; Lady Emma ſpoke of the pleaſantneſs of the phaeton, and tried to prevail on Conſtance to ride with them; but to this ſhe had more objections than ſhe thought fit to urge; ſhe declined it, but her ladyſhip ſtill preſſed it, ſaying, ſhe was ſure the converſation in the coach could not be ſo charming as to make her unwilling to quit it, and ſhe concluded with very earneſtly begging that ſhe would only try how pleaſant it was for the next ten miles: ſhe had juſt ſaid ſo, when Mrs. Stavenell coming up aſked what Lady Emma was begging for: Conſtance was going to ſpeak, when Lady Emma in a low voice ſaid haſtily—Don't tell her—ſay it was ſomething elſe. Unwilling to diſoblige her, and ſtill leſs inclined to aſſign a cauſe which was not the true one, Conſtance remained ſilent; but Mrs. Stavenell, who had overheard them, ſaid—I know what you was talking about—you want to perſuade

ſuade Miſs Fitzarthur to go kicked up in the air with you; but upon my life ſhe ſhan't—if my lord has a mind to break his neck and your's into the bargain well and good; but my niece ſhall go in the coach, and no where elſe. Lady Emma looked diſappointed, and quitting them joined her brother: Conſtance, very glad to be releaſed from her importunity, and fearful of a renewal of it, walked during the remainder of their ramble either with her aunt or Lady Maria.

They returned to the inn juſt at dinner-time: and as ſoon as they roſe from table, the carriages were brought to the door: when Lord Farnford handed Conſtance to the coach he ſaid—cannot I prevail on you, madam, to truſt to my driving? you might depend on my care—I wiſh you would change places with Lady Emma. Conſtance only replied that ſhe could not, and got into the carriage.

Nothing material occurred during the remainder of their journey, , which was conducted according to their plan; and before two o'clock on the third day they reached London, to the no ſmall joy of Conſtance and Lady Maria, who were equally tired.

CHAP. V.

SINCERITY.

THE travellers dined together at Mrs. Stavenell's, and early in the evening, Lord Farnford and his ſiſters going to his houſe in Portman-ſquare, ſhe and her niece were left together. —How do you like my lord, and the two young ladies? was the firſt queſtion Mrs. Stavenell put to Conſtance after they were gone: ſhe replied, they were all very agreeable.—Lord Farnford and Lady Emma, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, are both of them very agreeable, but Lady Maria is ſo queer—come, tell me honeſtly what you think; I hate mincing: don't you think Lady Maria very odd?—I know ſo little of either of them, anſwered Conſtance, that I ought not to judge; but I think Lady Maria, though ſhe is rather reſerved, has ſomething very pleaſing in her when ſhe ſpeaks.—Aye, *when* ſhe ſpeaks, ſaid Mrs Stavenell, bnt her words I ſuppoſe ſhe thinks too precious to be thrown away, ſhe'll always be ſo while ſhe is ſo fond of reading—books, books, that's all her delight; or elſe to ſit a whole rainy day with ſomebody as ſhe likes; ſhe's a monſtrous deal too grave, ſhe hates cards, and I believe, by her own good will, would hardly ever ſtir out; ſhe's an odd

odd woman, that's for certain; but poor thing ſhe has ſad health.

The portrait Mrs. Stavenell had drawn of Lady Maria was not ſuch as excited diſguſt in Conſtance; on the contrary her opinion of her improved by every opportunity ſhe had of being acquainted with her, and ſhe was convinced that the reſerve with which ſhe behaved was not attributable to any thing that rendered her unamiable: the peculiarities pointed out to her, as objects of cenſure, tended rather to ſtrengthen her inclination to become more cloſely attached to her.

And pray, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, for you han't told me, what do you think of my lord?—I have ſeen ſo little of him, anſwered Conſtance, that I ſcarcely know what opinion to form; beſide, I am ſo incompetent a judge of what is right or wrong *here*, that I ought to ſee a little farther before I preſume either to applaud or condemn.—Oh that don't ſignify, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, you can tell I warrant you whether you like him or no; don't you think he's very handſome?—Certainly he is, replied Conſtance.—And don't you think him exceſſive polite? returned Mrs. Stavenell.—How can I judge of that, ſaid her niece, I know not what is politeneſs *here*, and that which I ſhould call ſo, would perhaps be thought the contrary, while what appears to me to be againſt the rules of good breeding, may be reckoned the exceſs of it.---Then I am poſitive, an-

ſwered Mrs. Stavenell, there's ſomething in my lord that you do not like; he has done ſomething to diſpleaſe you.—I ſhould not, I own, replied Conſtance, if I had been left to form my own opinion, have thought him very well bred.—I am amazed and aſtoniſhed to hear you ſay ſo, interrupted her aunt, why every body thinks him the pink of politeneſs; why child, all the world imitates him.—Then I acknowledge my judgment erroneous, replied Conſtance, and my ignorance muſt excuſe me.—But what is there, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, that you diſlike in him?—To tell you ingenuouſly my opinion, which is not worth attending to or aſking, replied Conſtance, though perhaps you will laugh at my folly, I ſhould not have imagined that a well-bred man could have taken pleaſure in ſtaring a ſimple country girl out of countenance: I never ſaw any body ſtare ſo: I did not know which way to turn my head, and really he was ſo civil that he was quite troubleſome.—Aye, returned Mrs. Stavenell, indeed there he was a little out; I was monſtrous angry with him, and ſcolded him handſomely; but it was want of thought, he did not mean to be rude; but you ſhan't put me out of conceit with my lord, he is a ſweet young man, though a little wild: but ſo are all young men, and I like it the better; he is a monſtrous favourite of mine, and ſo's his ſiſter, Lady Emma; what do you think of her?—I never ſaw any one, ſaid Conſtance, whoſe appearance

pearance prejudiced me ſo ſtrongly in their favour? —No, I durſt to ſay you did not, replied Mrs. Stavenell, ſhe is a pretty creature, and ſo lively! ſhe's always in tip-top ſpirits—God bleſs her, I believe ſhe never thinks of any thing—ſure never was two ſiſters more different!—I'd venture any money Maria dies an old maid, only becauſe ſhe's queer; for ſhe will not marry any man that would have her for her fortune, nor he muſtn't be a gay man, nor this and that and to'ther; ſo that I don't believe for my part, there's a man in the world good enough for her; and I'm ſo provok'd to ſee her ſo indifferent: ſhe finds faults with every offer, and then ſays ſhe thinks it much beſt to live ſingle—and then we have ſuch a lecture about diſſipation and bad huſbands.—I ſee its all meant for her ſiſter; ſhe leads her a ſad life, preaching to her from morning to night, and there's nothing Emma can do that's right.

From this converſation Conſtance learnt that, out of the three ſubjects of it, there was but one whoſe acquaintance was worth cultivating ſeriouſly: Lady Emma's great good nature and vivacity might captivate, but it was from ſomething more ſolid that Conſtance hoped to derive pleaſure: ſhe determined to attach herſelf as cloſely to Lady Maria as ſhe would permit her, and hoped to gather from her thoſe rules of conduct, which ſhe began to fear Mrs. Stavenell could not give her.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

DIFFICULTY.

THE hurry of a change of reſidence was over in two or three days, and Miſs Fitzarthur found herſelf agreeably ſettled: Mrs. Stavenell treated her with the utmoſt kindneſs, and introduced her to the many who viſited at her houſe: Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton were ſo attentive to her that a day ſeldom paſſed without her ſeeing them, and her time was ſo engroſſed with company, viſits, breakfaſt-parties, airings on horſeback, walks and public places, that ſhe had not leiſure to attend to any thing that had, while ſhe was at Marſtonbury, been the object of her purſuit: ſhe had brought ſome books to town with her, but they yet remained packed up; and ſhe ſaw herſelf embarked in a vortex from which ſhe could not extricate herſelf: at firſt the novelty and the gaiety of the ſeveral amuſements ſhe partook of pleaſed her; but ſhe ſoon found that ſhe had exchanged ſubſtantial gratification for that which had nothing intrinſically valuable to boaſt: irregularities to which ſhe had never been accuſtomed, late hours, fatigue, and ſudden tranſitions from heat to cold, in a fortnight affected her health and countenance: ſhe loſt her colour, her ſtrength, and ſpirits; and finding it impoſſible to continue the diſſipated life ſhe now led, ſhe determined

mined by ſome means or other to detach herſelf from it, but ſhe knew her aunt well enough to be convinced that this would be very difficult.

Another circumſtance ſtrengthened this wiſh and rendered ſtill more deſirable ſome alteration in her way of ſpending her time. The very cloſe connection ſubſiſting between her aunt and Lord Farnford's family, made their viſits to each other very frequent: Mrs. Stavenell dined in Portman-ſquare generally twice a week; and Lord Farnford and his ſiſters were, either one or more, at Mrs. Stavenell's every day: beſide this, which was but a natural conſequence of their intimacy, Mrs. Stavenell and her niece ſcarcely ever were at any public place where they did not meet Lord Farnford, whoſe behaviour to the latter, though it was ſtudiouſly polite, was ſuch as ſhe ſaw attracted the notice of whatever company they were with: to be ſo pointed out was very diſagreeable to her, but nothing ſhe could ſay could prevail on him to relax his exceſſive attention; ſhe in as plain terms as ſhe dared to uſe, told Mrs. Stavenell how much he diſtreſſed her; but, as might be expected, ſhe only laughed at her, and told her it was not perhaps *country* manners, but any lady in town would think herſelf honoured by Lord Farnford's civility.

To all ſentiments of delicacy, which ſhe conſtantly dignified with the appellations of *ſqeamiſhneſs* and *affectation*, Mrs. Stavenell was an utter ſtranger: ſhe was gratified by ſeeing her niece the object of attention, and her partiality for Lord Farnford inclined

clined her rather to think ſhe erred than that there was reaſonable ground for complaint: fearing, that if ſhe was more explicit, Mrs. Stavenell, whoſe prudence did not abound, would make what ſhe had ſaid the topic of converſation in the next company, ſhe dropt the ſubject and found ſhe could do nothing more than by a ſtudious coolneſs repel all lord Farnford's overtures to intimacy.

But nothing ſhe did, had any more effect than what ſhe ſaid; if ſhe danced, Lord Farnford was the firſt to addreſs her; if ſhe walked, or rode on horſeback he was of the party; ſhe never was at the opera without ſeeing him, and at the moment in which ſhe entered the houſe, he quitted his company, and remained during the whole of the performance by her. In ſhort, ſo certain was ſhe of meeting him wherever ſhe went, that no doubt could be entertained that he was told by ſome one or other of every engagement ſhe had; and from the little diſpoſition her aunt manifeſted to rid her of the evil, ſhe began to ſuſpect it was from her he had his intelligence.

What purpoſe this conduct of Lord Farnford's was to anſwer ſhe knew not:—ſhe could not imagine, nor did it appear, that he meant to make her uneaſy; he was acquainted with her engagement to Lord Reycolm; he often ſpoke of it; and Lord Reycolm's return, which was now expected, was frequently mentioned in his hearing, and by him: not conceiving it poſſible that Lord Farnford could entertain

tertain a paſſion for her which he knew muſt be hopeleſs, and not having yet diſcovered that his reaſon was at all times ſubſervient to his inclinations, ſhe was wholly at a loſs to account for that which occaſioned her ſo much vexation: having nobody to direct her, and being very unwilling to let her friends at Marſtonbury know ſhe was leſs happy than they wiſhed her, ſhe was obliged to truſt to her own judgment, and that determined her to give up public amuſements and private invitations, rather than to be a witneſs of the notice which Lord Farnford's intimacy with, and continual attendance on her attracted: ſhe had obſerved the looks of ſome of Mrs. Stavenell's acquaintance, the whiſper,—the titter behind the fan,—had heard half ſentences, and confirmations of ſuſpicions with,——*You would not believe me, but I told you it was ſo*;—and—*I knew how it would be when I heard ſhe was coming*, &c. &c.—hints which ſerved to convince her that all the world did not think ſo lightly of Lord Farnford's particularity to her, as her aunt did.

The propriety and neceſſity of avoiding in her conduct whatever could, if reported to Lord Reycolm, lead him to ſuſpect ſhe was held only by her promiſe, was a doctrine Lady Barbara Fitzarthur had often inculcated on her daughter: Conſtance was well aware of it, and therefore wiſhed her ſituation to be generally underſtood, in order to repreſs all unreaſonable hopes: in every other inſtance ſhe had ſucceeded; ſhe was aſked for news of Lord Reycolm

Reycolm by his acquaintance, and by all gentlemen, excepting Lord Farnford, was treated as if Lord Reycolm was preſent: but nothing would repreſs Lord Farnford: he ſaw he embarraſſed her, he ſaw ſhe diſliked his aſſiduity, but he remained unchanged.

To ſubmit to the judgments which thoſe who were ignorant of the circumſtances under which ſhe acted, and who in the concluſions they drew did not always chuſe the moſt favourable, was in her eſtimation an equal injury to herſelf and Lord Reycolm: it might excite ſuſpicions in him, if he ſhould at any time hereafter be told that a more than ordinary degree of intimacy had been obſerved between Lord Farnford and her; and as her affection had never, even in thought, ſtrayed from him, as ſhe looked for his approbation of her conduct, and conſidered herſelf as already his wife, to ſuffer improper conſtructions to be put on her behaviour was an inſult to him, which ſhe could not ſuffer: ſhe therefore reſolved to ſerve herſelf of the excuſe of her health; but in what way to prevail on Mrs. Stavenell ſhe could not tell; ſhe at laſt thought of informing Lady Maria of her wiſh, without aſſigning the chief cauſe, and to beg her advice.

An opportunity of ſpeaking to her alone offered the next day: Lady Maria called on her to take a walk in the park, and having drawn her ladyſhip into one of the leſs frequented walks, ſhe told her that ſhe was encouraged by the kindneſs ſhe had

ſhewn

ſhewn her, to aſk her advice in a matter of ſome importance to her.—Conſtance then ſtated to her how diſagreeable the manner in which ſhe lived was to her inclination, and how prejudicial to her health, and begged her to tell her how ſhe could prevail on Mrs. Stavenell to ſuffer her to lead a more regular life, and how ſhe ſhould beſt decline the invitations given her.

With a ſmile expreſſive of pleaſure at what ſhe had heard, and approbation of Conſtance's wiſh, Lady Maria anſwered—You cannot tell, Miſs Fitzarthur, half the ſatisfaction it gives me to find you are not captivated by ſuch a life as Mrs. Stavenell leads herſelf, and means you ſhould lead: the diſpoſition which the firſt ſight of you excited in me to become attached to you I have repreſſed, till I ſaw what your inclinations were:—had you been pleaſed with diſſipation I ſhould have conſigned you to my ſiſter; but, finding you one of the few who are diſpoſed and able to think, I muſt retain you for myſelf. and you may depend on any thing I can do to remedy the evil you complain of. I would tell Mrs. Stavenell that a leſs quantity of what is called pleaſure would be more agreeable to you, but you muſt by this time have found out that I am no favourite with her; and I am ſure a conſtruction which did not belong to it, would be put on whatever I could ſay. Mrs. Stavenell is a very good woman in her way—the obligations we have to her are ſuch as we can never diſcharge, and

I ſhall

I ſhall always gratefully acknowledge; but Mrs. Staveneil is one of the laſt women I would wiſh to live with: her love of cards and company is ſo great, that ſhe thinks all who love any thing better either fools or hypocrites; and I am certain, were I to ſpeak to her on this ſubject, ſhe would conclude that I wiſhed, by detaching you from her parties, to ſecure a larger ſhare of your company: it therefore reſts with yourſelf, and I can do nothing that I think will eſſentially ſerve you, but adviſe you, if you really find the manner of life you are now in diſagreeable, to decline accompanying her ſo often as ſhe expects you; and to give as a reaſon for it that late hours and irregularity will not agree with your conſtitution: this may not perhaps ſatisfy her at firſt; but if you remain firm, her importunity will ceaſe, though perhaps it may coſt you, as it has me, a large portion of her favour.—Conſtance replied that ſhe ſhould be very ſorry to offend Mrs. Stavenell, but that it was abſolutely impoſſible for her to continue ſo irregular a life.—Then, ſaid Lady Maria, you muſt reſolve to ſtand the laugh; if ridicule could have deterred me from purſuing my own plan of living, I had been immerſed in pleaſure, as my ſiſter is; but I was determined, and the united efforts of almoſt all my acquaintance failed, who, notwithſtanding my natural ill ſtate of health, would have forced me to that which muſt in a ſhort time have laid me up. There will be one objection I foreſee made to your ſcheme,

and

and that is your remaining at home alone: now, to obviate this, let me know when you do not accompany Mrs. Stavenell, and either come to me, or send to me to sit with you; I am not half so much engaged as Lady Emma, therefore the chances will be much in favour of my being able to come to you, or to receive you; and I assure you I shall reckon those very pleasant hours which I shall thus have an opportunity of spending with you.

Constance was extremely sensible of Lady Maria's kindness, and determined to follow her advice: their mutual regard was so much increased by this interview, that it was with reluctance they parted, Lady Maria apparently much pleased with her new friend, and Constance so delighted with her company and conversation, that she would willingly have foregone all other amusements for the sake of an uninterrupted intercourse with her.

Mrs. Stavenell was out when her niece reached home, and she seized this opportunity to write to Marstonbury, she was just sitting down for the purpose when Lord Reycolm's friend, Lord Calorne, whom she had not seen during a space of five years, was announced.

From her well known connexion and intended marriage with Lord Reycolm, she derived the advantage of being at liberty to speak her sentiments freely, to approve without the danger of being thought attached, and to confess the pleasure she derived from seeing some of her acquaintance,

towards whom her behaviour, but for this circumſtance, muſt have been cautious: this privilege ſhe now exerciſed, and rejoiced in; her pleaſure at ſeeing Lord Calorne, with whom in a vacation ſpent with Lord Reycolm at her father's, ſhe had paſſed many agreeable hours, was great, and ſhe had no reaſon to conceal it: his appeared no leſs, he was juſt come to town, had heard from Lord Farnford's family that ſhe was with Mrs. Stavenell, and having a ſlight acquaintance with her, he thought it, he ſaid, incumbent on him to make her niece a viſit.

The time elapſed ſince they laſt met had improved in Conſtance a very pretty girl into a lovely woman, and it had been equally beneficial to Lord Calorne: the reſpect which Conſtance had before entertained for him was increaſed by the maturity of his underſtanding; his regard for her was confirmed by ſeeing the progreſs which all the promiſing indications he had obſerved in her had made: they met with the unreſtrained affection of a brother and ſiſter, and near an hour ſlipped away in the pleaſing recollection of paſt occurrences. Their converſation was interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Stavenell, ſoon after which Lord Calorne, having obtained leave to become a viſitor at her houſe, retired.

As ſoon as he was gone——Well, my dear, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, what does Lord Calorne ſay? you ha'n't ſeen him a great while; has he heard from your gentleman?—Lord Reycolm, replied Conſtance

ſtance, has not written to him ſince I heard.—Well, and how do you like Lord Calorne? ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, he is very much altered ſince you ſaw him, isn't he?—Not much altered, Conſtance anſwered: but he is conſiderably improved.—What returned Mrs. Stavenell, he's one of your favourites I ſuppoſe—a great many people likes him, and Lady Emma Peryton among the reſt; but I don't like him half ſo well as Lord Farnford—he's the young man for my money.—My father has a very great regard for Lord Calorne, ſaid Conſtance; he uſed to ſay, when he was at Marſtonbury with us, that he was ſure he would be an ornament to his country; for that he had more underſtanding, learning, and application, and was better acquainted with the intereſts of his country, than any young man he had met with, or than could have been expected from him, as he was educated for the army.—Indeed I believe it may be true, reſumed Mrs. Stavenell; but for all that I like Lord Farnford beſt.—I could make a ſpecial match between Lord Calorne and Lady Maria, but I wiſh he would pleaſe to like Lady Emma, for ſhe's monſtrous fond of him, and I'm ſure 'twould be a very good match for him: ſhe has fifteen thouſand pound, and his father is not over and above rich.—A match betweeen Lord Calorne and Lady Maria was no abſurd idea, and had not ſhe been five years older than his lordſhip it had been deſirable; but in the wiſh for an union

between

etween him and Lady Emma, Conſtance could not concur.

At the end of their converſation Mrs. Stavenell was going to dreſs for a route in the evening, when her niece, after a little heſitation, begged to be excuſed accompanying her.—What! a'nt you well? ſaid Mrs. Stavenell.—I am not ill, replied Conſtance, but really raking does not agree with me, and I ſhould be glad to avoid it.—Pooh, pooh child, anſwered Mrs. Stavenell, don't let's have any fancies—you have walked too much, but you'll be very well again by the evening—why what the duce would you do, ſit and mope at home?—Come, come, don't be fooliſh—there's nothing like pleaſure for young people.—Indeed, replied Conſtance, Madam, you would oblige me by letting me ſtay at home.—I am ſure it is very viſible that late hours do not agree with me.—What, ſaid her aunt, laughing, you're afraid of loſing your colour:—now I think you had a great deal too much when you came to me, and I was glad to ſee it going off.—I am not anxious about that, Conſtance anſwered, but the loſing it is a ſign of declining health; and my mother would blame me very much for perſiſting in what is evidently injurious to me.—I have a perpetual head-ach; every additional irregularity increaſes it, and my ſpirits will not ſupport me if I live ſo.—Why, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, what will you do with yourſelf if you ſtay at home?—it will be exceſſive

exceſſive dull.—By no means, Conſtance replied, I have been uſed to be alone, and ſhould ſometimes chuſe it: at other times I would ſpend the evening with Lady Maria Peryton, ſhe ſays ſhe ſhall be glad to ſee me.—Oh you're to go and mope with Lady Maria! returned Mrs. Stavenell—they ſay great wits love ſolitude; but I didn't know as you ſet up for a great wit,—but hows'ever I don't mean to vex you;—you ſhall live as you pleaſe:—it won't be long that you'l do that, but you muſt go with me this evening, and then you ſhall do as you pleaſe.

Conſtance gladly accepted the compromiſe, and knowing ſhe ſhould meet Lady Maria at the rout they were going to, ſhe intended to tell her ſucceſs, and to learn whether ſhe was engaged for the next evening: her ladyſhip came in ſoon after Mrs. Stavenell and Miſs Fitzarthur, who, while the card tables were filling, drawing her towards the window, communicated the intelligence ſo pleaſing to both.—Then you are not engaged to-morrow, are you? ſaid Lady Maria, will you come to me—my brother and ſiſter will be at the opera, and I ſhall be alone.—This was immediately agreed on, and Conſtance hoped ſhe ſhould now be rid of Lord Farnford's wearying aſſiduity, and lead a life more conſonant to her inclinations, and leſs prejudicial to her health.

CHAP. VII.

VEXATION.

THE next morning brought her a letter from Lord Reycolm, naming that day fortnight for his ſeeing her: Lord Farnford called in juſt after its arrival, and Mrs. Stavenell in Conſtance's preſence, told him of it: that it gave his lordſhip very little pleaſure was evident; he in a tone of affected jocularity ſaid he muſt take care how he behaved now, for if he looked at Miſs Fitzarthur he ſhould expect a challenge.—I ſuppoſe, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, we ſhall have my niece on the high ropes till he comes:—I durſt to ſay ſhe'll be counting the hours: Have you reckoned how many hours there is in a fortnight, my dear?—I ſhall keep a calendar for Miſs Fitzarthur, replied Lord Farnford:—every hour that brings Lord Reycolm nearer to his happineſs, places mine at a greater diſtance.

Mrs. Stavenell's eyes were now fixed on Conſtance, who was diſtreſſed and confuſed: Lord Farnford had never ſpoken ſo plainly before; and the aukwardneſs of her ſituation, and her fear that he ſhould ſay more, prompted her to make ſome excuſe to get out of the room; ſhe therefore, ſaying ſhe would take advantage of the fineneſs of the morning by going into the park, took her leave of Lord Farnford, whom ſhe heard as ſhe was ſhutting

the door ſay—When does he come? I would give him a thouſand pounds to keep away but ſix weeks longer;—I hope I could in that time perſuade her.

She ſtaid ſo long above ſtairs that ſhe imagined Lord Farnford was gone; but ſhe found him where ſhe left him: ſhe rang for the ſervant who was to attend her, and was quitting the room, when Lord Farnford ſaid he would accompany her: her colour roſe at this provoking civility, and ſhe anſwered—by no means, my Lord, I prefer walking alone.—My dear creature, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, how can you be ſo ſilly and ſo rude?—Go with her, my Lord, I warrant you ſhe won't diſlike it;—but ſhe's ſo ſhy:—ſhe's like your ſiſter Maria.

Conſtance now taking off her cloak, ſaid ſhe would not walk.—Why, hey-day exclaimed Mrs. Stavenell, what's the matter now?—Why, won't you walk becauſe my Lord offered to walk with you?—I never ſee any thing ſo fantaſtical: for goodneſs ſake, child, let's have none of theſe airs—I do not mean, replied Conſtance mildly, to give myſelf airs; but if Lord Farnford does not ſee the impropriety of his behaviour to me, and the diſagreeable ſituations into which his politeneſs draws me, it is very fit I ſhould ſee it and be careful.—Why, Miſs Fitzarthur, interrupted he, what is it I have done to offend you?---How can you put an ill-conſtruction on my behaviour!---I would put the beſt conſtruction on it, replied Conſtance;---I know that it

is attributable to a degree of attention, which I am ſure it neither becomes your lordſhip's rank to ſhew me, nor mine to receive; and did the world put no worſe conſtruction on it than I do, I ſhould be ſatisfied; but you cannot be ignorant that your politeneſs frequently embarraſſes me:---you have ſeen how it has drawn the eyes of others towards me; and, to uſe no diſguiſe, I cannot but think that in receiving ſuch particular civilities from your lordſhip, though they are intended only as marks of reſpect for Mrs. Stavenell, I put a tacit inſult on Lord Reycolm:—on this account I decline them:—I beg you to ſuffer me to remain undiſtinguiſhed, and I give you my reaſon for ſaying I will not walk if you think it neceſſary to accompany me.

Mrs. Stavenell was ſilent.---Lord Farnford after having heard Conſtance without interruption, replied---You are very good indeed, Miſs Fitzarthur, to put on my behaviour what you think the beſt conſtruction it deſerves:---if I have erred, blame yourſelf not me, for did you know my heart, you would allow that the reſtraint I have ſubmitted to was almoſt too painful to be borne; but I muſt now vindicate myſelf:---Mrs. Stavenell is not ignorant of the conflict I have endured ever ſince I firſt ſaw you;--ſhe has pitied me, and given me all opportunities of mitigating my ſufferings by ſeeing you:--the being preſent with you has been a temporary relief to me, but it has aggravated what I have felt at quitting you:---why ſhould I conceal, or how can I con-

I conceal from you that I love you ?---every action of my life beſpeaks it :---is it criminal ?---no ſurely ; 'tis virtue to admire you,---it would be ſtoical inſenſibility not to love you---if then, knowing your pre-engagement, I acknowledge my love hopeleſs, why will you cruelly deprive me of the only means by which I can render my misfortunes ſupportable.

Diſtreſſed beyond imagination at this avowal, Conſtance ſat with her eyes fixed on the carpet, nor was ſhe able to ſay a word in reply to Lord Farnford : ſhe would have given the world to get out of the room, but ſhe had not courage even to riſe : a friendly knock at the door relieved her ; and in a few ſeconds in bounced Lady Emma Peryton ; coming up to Miſs Fitzarthur with her uſual vivacity, ſhe ſaid :---My dear, you a'nt engaged, are you ? 'tis the ſweeteſt morning ;---all the beau monde are in the park:---come and walk in the mall : I came to fetch you.---Then turning to Mrs. Stavenell before Conſtance could anſwer, ſhe entered into converſation with her at a little diſtance :---this interval Lord Farnford improved, and ſaid :---Will you forgive me, Miſs Fitzarthur---I am ſorry I diſtreſſed you :---forgive me and I will not offend again. ---I hope, replied Conſtance, that your lordſhip is convinced your particular attention ſubjects me to inconvenience, and that for the future you will not render my ſituation painful by expoſing me to the cenſorious judgment of the world.---Make allowances for me, ſaid Lord Farnford, and you ſhall have no

reaſon to complain.---Conſtance made no anſwer, but taking her cloak, told Lady Emma ſhe was ready to accept her propoſition; who, turning to her brother, ſaid,---Won't you go with us? how can you be ſo idle as to ſit by the fire-ſide, and turn two poor damſels out, with only their footmen?---Oh, replied his lordſhip, I mean to follow you:---I want to ſpeak a word to Mrs. Stavenell---I ſhall overtake you before you get into the park.---This was more true than Conſtance wiſhed; they had not reached the bottom of the ſteps before Lord Farnford joined them; and, as if he was a ſtanger to Conſtance's ſentiments, he walked with them: ſhe was vexed and aſtoniſhed at his effrontery, but had no way to extricate herſelf. About the middle of the mall they met a party with whom Lady Emma was intimately, and Miſs Fitzarthur ſlightly acquainted; they ſtopped, and converſed for a few minutes, and as they were talking, Conſtance hear'd a gentleman who was paſſing behind her ſay to a lady he was walking with ——Lord Farnford and Miſs Fitzarthur!—it would be a miracle to ſee one without the other;—they are inſeparable.—Lady Emma did not hear this, but Conſtance ſaw that Lord Farnford, who at the mention of his name turned haſtily round, did:—ſhe took advantage of this circumſtance, and ſaid to him in a low voice, —Now is not that a proof of what I ſaid?—It is, anſwered he, and to ſhew you how much I prefer y our eaſe to my own gratification, I will wiſh you

good

good morning.—So ſaying, he bowed, and quitted her. Lady Emma had communicated and received a ſufficient quantity of goſſip; ſhe took leave of her company, and miſſing her brother aſked where he was: Conſtance replied he had quitted them while ſhe was talking, and had turned back: Lady Emma could ſcarcely believe her, but ſhe could not long doubt: Lord Farnford did not again join them, nor did they ſee him during the remainder of their walk.

When they got to the top of the mall, Lady Emma propoſed going round the green-park, and as ſoon as they had quitted the company, ſhe ſaid to her companion—I was very much ſurpriſed, when I came in at Mrs. Stavenell's this morning, to ſee you look ſo:—I was afraid ſomething was the matter, till Mrs. Stavenell told me it was you and my brother had been having a tiff:—how can you, Miſs Fitzarthur, be ſo cruel to him?—How am I cruel? returned Conſtance:—I ſhould be ſorry to do wrong if I knew it.—Why you are cruel, ſaid her ladyſhip, in ſlighting him as you do:—any body may ſee how you treat him.—But what am I to do? Lady Emma, replied Conſtance, can I ſuffer Lord Farnford to behave as he is inclined to do, when I know that it is noticed as improper—not to ſlight and endeavour to repel his exceſſive aſſiduity is, I find to encourage it; and ſurely to ſubmit to be marked out as the ſubject of his particular attention, though it may be an honour to me, is an in-

jury to Lord Reycolm; at leaſt my reaſon tells me ſo.—My dear Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid Lady Emma, I would not have you do wrong; but ſurely becauſe you are under a ſort of promiſe to Lord Reycolm, you are not obliged to treat my brother as you do: —poor fellow! I do from my heart pity him —he ſays there is nothing but being with you that affords him the leaſt pleaſure, and you ſtrive to leſſen that as much as poſſible:—I believe he ſays very true, that Lord Reycolm's love for you cannot be ſo great as his, for if it had been, he could never have quitted you to go abroad:—the ſeeing you has made him completely unhappy; you can't think how it has altered him; he uſed to be ſo gay and ſo lively, and now he has never any ſpirits but when he is with you.—I am extremely ſorry, returned Conſtance, when Lord Farnford's advocate pauſed, that I ſhould be the occaſion of uneaſineſs to any one, but I cannot conceive it poſſible, ſuppoſing even that novelty and frequent acceſs to Mrs. Stavenell's houſe had drawn your brother's attention towards me, that he ſhould ſuffer *me*, whom he knew to be already engaged, to make him for a moment unhappy.—My dear, ſaid Lady Emma, how little do you know of the world!—my brother ſaw you and loved you:—his love for you has been every moment increaſing, and will increaſe as long as he lives, notwithſtanding your engagement to Lord Reycolm; which I do moſt ſincerely wiſh had never been made.—But can Lord Farnford Conſtance anſwered

anſwered, ſuffer his paſſions to be ſo entirely predominant over his reaſon, as to overcome the conſideration that I am irrevocably Lord Reycolm's? —Not irrevocably ſurely! repeated Lady Emma, —a promiſe made ſo long ago, and when you had ſeen ſo little of the world, ought not to bind you. —How can you talk ſo? Lady Emma, ſaid Conſtance, ſurely it does bind me.—No I cannot think it does, her ladyſhip replied:—I dare ſay were you to tell Lord Reycolm that my brother's love for you was entitled to a return, and that you wiſhed yourſelf at liberty, he would free you from your promiſe.—When I could be baſe enough, Conſtance anſwered, to think of ſo ſcandalous an evaſion, he would I am ſure comply with my wiſh, and he muſt rejoice that he had it in his power to get rid of ſo unprincipled a creature; but you cannot think ſeriouſly, I am convinced, Lady Emma, that I am not bound by my promiſe.—Indeed I do, ſaid her ladyſhip, and my brother thinks ſo.—Then it is the hope I ſuppoſe, Conſtance replied, that I may be brought to the ſame opinion, that makes him think his labour not thrown away in perſecuting me.—Do not call it perſecution returned Lady Emma, I am ſure it is rather adoration.—I am very much concerned, as I ſaid before, anſwered Miſs Fitzarthur, wiſhing to change the diſcourſe, that I ſhould make any body unhappy; but in this inſtance it certainly is not my fault:—if Lord Farnford would exert a very little reaſon and re-

ſolution he might ſoon put an end to what he complains of.

How inſenſible you are, exclaimed Lady Emma.—Inſenſible! Conſtance repeated, ſurely in this caſe I ought to be inſenſible:—not to be ſo would be criminal.—Certainly not, Lady Emma replied: if you would yourſelf follow the advice you give my brother, and be governed by reaſon, you would perhaps ſee things in a different light.—Do not call that reaſon, ſaid Conſtance, which would teach me to diſregard my promiſe.—*Your* promiſe, rejoined her ladyſhip, 'tis not *your* promiſe to Lord Reycolm; tis your father's promiſe:—you cannot be ſaid to have choſe Lord Reycolm, for you had no choice; he was almoſt the only gentleman you had ever ſeen,—he was your couſin, and you were aſked if you had any objection to him;—you could have none,—but is this a choice, or is it poſſible that a promiſe made in this manner can bind you?—I know not, Conſtance replied, what its power is; but I will proportion my ſtrength to it, for it *ſhall* bind me.—Then, anſwered Lady Emma, 'tis not your *promiſe* but your *inclination* for Lord Reycolm that obliges you:—I was miſtaken in thinking your regard for him was not very great: but tell me, ſuppoſing Lord Reycolm out of the queſtion, would you accept my brother?—Oh! dear Lady Emma, ſaid Conſtance, how can I tell what I ſhould do?—I muſt do as my father and mother would have me.—A very good little girl indeed, returned

turned Lady Emma, in a tone of pleaſantry :—but tell me in ſhort how you like my brother ?

How can I judge after ſo ſhort an acquaintance ? Conſtance replied : I believe it is not much above three weeks that I have known him, and—But you might tell how you liked him in three minutes, interrupted Lady Emma :—What did you think of him when you ſaw him firſt ?—This is not a fair queſtion, ſaid Conſtance, I muſt ſay I liked him prodigiouſly, becauſe he's your brother.---Not for that reaſon returned her ladyſhip ; I want to know your real opinion of him. Heartily vexed at this importunity, and perceiving plainly that Lady Emma had been tutored, and furniſhed with arguments for the purpoſe, Conſtance reſolved not to ſuffer from concealing her ſentiments :—ſhe had no doubt that what ſhe ſaid would be reported to the ſubject of their converſation, and ſhe therefore anſwered : —Why, if I muſt tell the truth, the firſt hour I ſpent in Lord Farnford's company excited in me a wiſh.—What wiſh ? ſaid Lady Emma eagerly.—That Lord Reycolm's abſence, replied Conſtance, might not have made him like Lord Farnford.—Lady Emma ſtared ; ſhe was diſappointed, and looked a little diſpleaſed : but forcing a ſmile, ſhe aſked Miſs Fitzarthur what it was in her brother that ſhe diſliked : he is, ſaid ſhe, univerſally allowed to be very handſome ;—he is quite a man of faſhion ;—he has ſeen a great deal of the world, and he's very clever.—All this may be, and I do not

doubt is very true, Conſtance anſwered, and my prejudice may be ill-founded, but I tell you ingenuouſly what ſentiments occurred to me.

What is it in particular you diſlike? returned his ſiſter.—Why in the firſt place, ſaid Conſtance, he ſwears ſhockingly, and I cannot endure to hear it.—Mercy on me! replied Lady Emma, aſtoniſhed; if you're ſo ſqueamiſh, you muſt not walk along the ſtreets; for there your ears will be offended:—but pray what next?—In the ſecond place continued Conſtance, I was diſguſted by his fixing his eyes ſo intently on me:—I could not ſtir but he watched me:—I could not raiſe my head without meeting his eyes; and this gave me ſuch an opinion of his confidence and curioſity as, I believe I ſhall never overcome.—And is this all? ſaid Lady Emma.—Theſe, replied Conſtance, were the circumſtances on which my firſt judgment was formed; and ſince we have been in town I have, on comparing Lord Farnford's behaviour with that of ſome other gentlemen, found it ſo unreſtrained, and ſo confident, that I own, and I hope you will not be offended at a confeſſion you have extorted from me, that your brother is not a favourite with me,—though I acknowledge that at times there is ſomething very pleaſing in him.—He is obliged to you ſaid Lady Emma for this acknowledgment, though it is the ſmalleſt I ever heard made in his favour;—for I aſſure you, Miſs Fitzarthur, the world thinks very differently of him.—It is poſſible and probable

anſwered

anſwered Conſtance, that my judgment may be erroneous, and Lord Farnford in that caſe, is to be pitied for the injury I do him, and for having any thing in his exterior which ſhadows his real merit; but my opinion is ſo inſignificant, I wonder you ſhould think of aſking it.

The ladies had by this time reached the gate into Piccadilly; and Lady Emma, in whoſe countenance a little anger was apparent, ſtopping, ſaid ſhe had walked a great while, and would therefore go home immediately through Hyde Park: Conſtance offered to accompany her to Groſvenor gate; but ſhe ſtifly declined it, Conſtance ſaid—You muſt let me go with you, Lady Emma, or elſe I am ſure you will leave me angry at what I have ſaid of my lord.—No, indeed, her ladyſhip anſwered, with affected complaiſance, I ſhall not: I aſked what you thought, and ſhould have been diſobliged if you had not told me. She then took her leave, and Miſs Fitzarthur went home.

There ſhe met with Mrs. Stavenell, and the converſation was renewed by her on the ſubject of Lord Farnford: her aunt ſeemed to entertain juſt the ſame partiality for him and his abſurd paſſion as his ſiſter did: ſhe lamented his misfortune in being attached to one already engaged, and did not at all incline to think him reprehenſible for ſuffering his reaſon to be blinded. Conſtance wearied with this topic, made an excuſe to get away, and retired to another room.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

INTRUSION.

THIS was the day on which Miſs Fitzarthur was to begin her new mode of living: Mrs. Stavenell was engaged out for the evening, and her niece was to ſpend it with Lady Maria Peryton: ſhe had told Mrs. Stavenell of her intention, but had ſaid nothing of it to Lady Emma, who was to be at the opera with her brother.

Conſtance and her aunt dined without company, and as ſoon as they roſe from table, ſeparated: Mrs. Stavenell went to dreſs, her niece to amuſe herſelf at the harpſicord, where ſhe was juſt ſeated when the maid came in, and produced her a letter which ſhe ſaid Lady Maria Peryton's ſervant had brought and deſired ſhe would give her when nobody ſaw her: Conſtance took it, and opening it, found theſe words:

'My dear Miſs Fitzarthur will, I am ſure, 'put the beſt conſtruction on a requeſt I am forced 'to make. I promiſed myſelf the pleaſure of 'ſeeing her this evening; but an unforeſeen acci-'dent obliges me to forego this gratification. I 'will call in Spring-garden early in the morning, 'and explain it; at preſent I have not time.— 'To deſire her not to mention having received

'this

'this, is perhaps unneceſſary, that it is delivered
'to her in private is a ſufficient caution; but if
'ſhe could make an excuſe to Mrs. Stavenell,
'either of indiſpoſition, or the weather, for her
'remaining at home, it would oblige

'her very affectionate,

'MARIA PERYTON.'

What inference was to be drawn from this note, other than that Lady Maria did not wiſh to ſee her, Conſtance could not imagine: ſhe ſuſpected that Lady Emma had related the converſation they had had, and that her ſiſter was offended at it; but the ſtyle of the billet did not warrant this ſuſpicion, nor did ſhe think Lady Maria would take offence at her having ſpoken her ſentiments perhaps too freely: ſhe was perplexed and diſturbed, but determined to do as ſhe was deſired. As ſoon, therefore, as ſhe ſaw Mrs. Stavenell ſhe told her that ſhe thought it would be imprudent for her to go out; that ſhe had, as ſhe knew, had a cold ſome days, and feared ſhe might increaſe it.—Well, anſwered Mrs. Stavenell, but Lady Maria expects you: ſhe will ſtay at home for you.—Not for me, ſaid Conſtance, ſhe would be at home whether I went or not.---But, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, you may go very ſafe: go in the chair, and wrap yourſelf up, and I'll warrant you don't catch cold.—No, replied her niece, I cannot go; I will apologize to Lady Maria when I ſee her; I am ſure ſhe will forgive me. Mrs. Stavenell tried to laugh

laugh her out of her reſolution; but her reaſons were too good; ſhe, therefore, not without ſome ſarcaſtic expreſſions at her verſatility, and inſiſting on her ſending an excuſe, ſuffered her to remain at home.

A ſervant was diſpatched to Portman-ſquare, Mrs. Stavenell went out, and Conſtance being too much occupied by this myſterious billet to read, ſat down to work: ſhe had been alone about an hour, and the ſervant was juſt returned, when a knock at the door beſpoke viſitors: the door of the drawing room, where ſhe was, was thrown open, and Lord Farnford announced—Did you ſay, ſaid ſhe to the footman, that my aunt was out?—The man anſwered,—My lord only aſked for you, madam, he did not aſk for my miſtreſs. Half angry at this intruſion, Conſtance omitted telling the ſervant to ſhew him up, but this ceremony was needleſs; his lordſhip was at the heels of his meſſenger, and before ſhe could recollect herſelf, was in the room: he came in, apologizing for breaking in on her, in a manner that indicated buſineſs: ſhe anſwered coldly, that ſhe imagined the ſervant had neglected to tell him Mrs. Stavenell was from home:—he replied, he knew ſhe was, but that his viſit was in conſequence of a meſſage which Lady Maria had juſt received. Your ſervant, ſaid he, alarmed us by ſaying you were not well enough to venture out, and, fearing you were worſe than you owned, I came myſelf to inquire

after

after you.---Conſtance thanked him for his civility, ſaying ſhe had got a ſlight cold, and preferred ſtaying at home: but added ſhe, I underſtood you were engaged at the opera.---I have heard every ſong and ſeen every dance ten thouſand times he replied, and, as Emma went with a party I got excuſed, Here a pauſe enſued; and Conſtance felt very uneaſy; ſhe, however, hoped, as he had always many engagements, that he would ſoon go; but he ſeemed to have taken up his reſidence there for the evening: ſhe would not encourage him by converſation, and therefore remained ſilent; this had no effect, for he forced her to talk; he never was at a loſs for topics, and it was in his power to make a tête à tête very agreeable, but this ſuppoſes an abſence of fear: a bleſſing which Miſs Fitzarthur did not at that time enjoy: whenever he ſpoke ſhe trembled leſt he ſhould diſtreſs her as he had done in the morning; but he ſeemed diſpoſed to behave very rationally: ſhe determined not to prolong his ſtay by ordering tea, but the ſervant without directions brought it in: how to get rid of him now ſhe knew not, as he had a pretence for ſtaying; her apprehenſions were indeed relieved, as while the footman was in the room ſhe was ſecure. Tea was over, and Lord Farnford making a motion to go, aſked her if ſhe expected any company; embarraſſed and afraid of giving him even the ſmalleſt encouragement, ſhe replied, that though ſhe did not expect company particularly,

particularly,, ſhe was at home to every body.---I may then, ſaid he, hope for half an hour's uninterrupted converſation with you; ſquib viſits will not begin yet. Conſtance, confuſed, frightened, and heartily angry at his aſſurance, ſaid not a word, and he proceeded---I know, he ſaid, that I have diſpleaſed you by what I unguardedly ſuffered to eſcape my lips this morning, and I own that you are juſtly offended: my buſineſs is to beg your forgiveneſs, and to promiſe amendment.---To avoid hearing more, ſhe interrupted him by ſaying, that ſhe only deſired him not to ſubject her to cenſure, and that ſhe would endeavour to forget what was paſſed.---You may; you will forget it, he replied, and you will forget how the confeſſion I made was wrung from me; and could I obtain as friendly a power of oblivion I might hope for peace; but this is more than will be granted me: I am fated to love you, though I know you are another's: I am ordained to ſuffer, and that in ſilence, but this——at theſe words his lordſhip was interrupted, and his auditor relieved by the ſudden opening of the door, and a meſſage from Lord Calorne that if it was perfectly convenient he would wait on Miſs Fitzarthur.---It is perfectly convenient, ſhe anſwered, deſire Lord Calorne to walk up.---Lord Farnford ſaid, he was ſorry he was come, and roſe.

Perſonal merit always ſecured Lord Calorne a welcome; but his viſit now was particularly opportune:

portune: Conſtance received him with pleaſure, and her countenance expreſſed it: the converſation was on general ſubjects, it was agreeably ſupported, and ſhe had almoſt forgotten her late panic; yet not knowing how ſhort Lord Calorne's viſit might be, and fearing being again left to Lord Farnford, ſhe could not be quite eaſy: Lord Calorne intimated as a reaſon for ſeeing her ſo ſoon, that he had a letter from Lord Reycolm; this hint Lord Farnford would not take, he kept his place, and drove Lord Calorne to the neceſſity of pointing out a paſſage in Lord Reycolm's letter which he wiſhed Miſs Fitzarthur to ſee, and which he was evidently deſirous to communicate and converſe on in a leſs reſtrained way.

Soon after, Lord Calorne roſe to go; but Conſtance urged his ſtay, ſaying, ſhe was wholly unengaged, and as Lord Farnford had done her the honor to call in, ſhe was glad of the preſence of a third to ſupply her deficiecny of converſation: Lord Calorne complied, and now her only fear was leſt Lord Farnford ſhould in revenge out-ſit him; that he meant to do ſo was in a ſhort time paſt all doubt, and ſhe was entirely at a loſs to extricate herſelf; but reſolved, if it were poſſible. to defeat Lord Farnford's purpoſe. Lord Calorne again roſe; when, driven to extremities, ſhe looked at her watch and ſaid---It is not yet nine o'clock; it wants a quarter; ſtay till the clock ſtrikes, and then we ſhall all break up, and I will go and nurſe my cold. This

Manœuvre

manœuvre ſucceeded; at nine the triumvirate parted, and Lord Farnford was forced to go; but he had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing Lord Calorne go before him, his carriage being firſt up: the few minutes that this obliged him to wait he improved by repeating his proteſtations of ſorrow for what he had ſaid in the morning, and his promiſes of all poſſible future circumſpection: he then, to the no ſmall joy of Miſs Fitzarthur, took his leave, and departed.

CHAP. IX.

DISCRETION.

THE next morning, before breakfaſt-time, Lady Maria removed all Conſtance's fears of having given her offence by calling on her: Mrs. Stavenell, in conſequence of being out late the preceding evening, was not yet up; and as ſhe choſe to breakfaſt in her chamber, her niece hoped for an explanation of the note ſhe had received: as ſoon as they were alone, Lady Maria ſaid---I am afraid I have drawn on myſelf a ſuſpicion, not only of incivility in the extreme, but of want of regard for you; or elſe I am ſure I have puzzled you by my extraordinary requeſt laſt night---To tell you the truth, Miſs Fitzarthur anſwered, you have puzzled me; but I knew as you were ſo kind

kind as to ſay you would call this morning, it would be explained, and I aſſure you I ſuſpected nothing, unleſs for about a moment, that I had offended you.---Indeed, ſaid Lady Maria, it wore a very odd appearance; it was done out of concern for you, though I failed in what I intended; and I now heartily repent that I did it: but I will make myſelf intelligible: I found Mrs. Stavenell had told my brother you were to be with me, and that, for that reaſon, he would not go to the opera; I feared he might render your viſit very diſagreeable, and that, and other conſiderations made me think it prudent to prevent your meeting; but he outwitted me; for he went out ſoon after your ſervant came, and on his return I learned that he had been with you: I then ſincerely wiſhed I had not written to you, as I deprived myſelf of a pleaſure for no purpoſe, and by my exceſſive caution expoſed you ſtill more than if you had met him at our houſe.

From this excuſe, ſo highly ſatisfactory, and ſo commendatory of Lady Maria's prudence, it was evident that ſhe, as well as her ſiſter, and Mrs. Stavenell, was acquainted with Lord Farnford's attachment to Miſs Fitzarthur; who thanked her for her attention and her care to ſave her from embarraſſment, however it had ſucceeded.---And pray, ſaid Lady Maria, how did my brother behave? madly or reaſonably?---Tolerably well, replied Conſtance, Lord Calorne came in.---Do you

know, reſumed her ladyſhip, after a pauſe, and looking ſtedfaſtly at Conſtance, how terribly he has ſuffered his paſſions to over rule his reaſon? I was afraid leſt he ſhould improve the opportunity of ſeeing you alone, and tell you that which of all things he ſhould moſt ſolicitouſly conceal. Conſtance was ſilent, and ſhe continued:---Do you know, for you muſt know it in order to guard againſt it, that the engagement you are already under has not been ſufficient to deter him from becoming moſt violently attached to you?---Perhaps he has had prudence enough to keep it from you; but I tell you that you may in your behaviour, to him avoid every thing that can be conſtrued into encouragement; for a ſmall glimmering of ſucceſs will excite hope in him, and I really believe he does not think it impoſſible to win you from Lord Reycolm.---I am very ſorry for it, ſaid Conſtance, I offended Lord Farnford this morning by refuſing to walk when he offered to accompany me; and being provoked at my refuſal, he told me what I wiſhed never to hear: however Lord Reycolm will come over ſoon, and Lord Farnford has promiſed to be ſilent.---I pity him, ſaid Lady Maria, becauſe he is really unhappy: but I blame him for ſuffering himſelf to be ſo; he ſinks without exerting himſelf in the ſmalleſt degree; if there were really any proſpect of ſucceſs for him, I ſhould not wonder at him, but it ſeems to me ſo hopeleſs a caſe that I cannot acquit him of folly;

folly:---as I am ſure, ſhe continued, that you are above taking pleaſure in the pain of another, I need not hint to you the propriety of ſhunning him; you can no other way avoid his troubleſome importunity, or depreſs his expectations; for it is not impoſſible that he may think your engagement to Lord Reycolm his only obſtacle.

Perceiving this was ſaid to diſcover her ſentiments reſpecting Lord Farnford, Conſtance thought it incumbent on her to be as explicit with Lady Maria as ſhe had been with her ſiſter: ſhe, therefore related the converſation between her and Lady Emma; and ſo far was Lady Maria from ſtyling her *cruel or inſenſible*, that ſhe commended her reſolution, and was pleaſed with her frankneſs.

From a free converſation with Lady Maria, Conſtance learned much of the character of her brother and ſiſter, which, though favourably drawn, did not increaſe her veneration for them. Her ladyſhip mentioned Lady Emma's attachment to Lord Calorne, and intimated a wiſh that their union and their happineſs were not ſo diametrically oppoſite as they appeared from the difference of their tempers: ſhe ſeemed to think Lord Calorne rather inclined to the match, but yet, repelled by Lady Emma's foibles. Conſtance joined in her commendation of him, and ſecretly wiſhed the attraction of the elder ſiſter's good ſenſe had been more powerful than that of the younger's beauty.---Do you know Lord Calorne's ſiſter? ſaid Lady Maria.

Maria.---No, ſaid Conſtance, I never ſaw her; but I have heard Mrs. Stavenell mention her ſlightly: I have often thought to aſk him after her, for I do not recollect having heard him ſpeak of her in the two viſits he has made here, and when he was at Marſtonbury he uſed to talk much of her, and to wiſh I was acquainted with her.—You muſt not expect, ſaid Lady Maria, to hear of her; and I would adviſe you not to inquire after her; ſhe has married without the knowledge of her family, and her father will not ſee her: her brother has done all in his power to effect a reconciliation, but finding it impoſſible, he takes part with neither, and behaves ſo prudently as to pleaſe both ſides.—And is ſhe well married? ſaid Conſtance.—Very well, in my opinion, anſwered Lady Maria, though in the opinion of the world not ſo; he is a gentleman of a good family, with conſiderable expectations, but his fortune at preſent is ſmall: a man of unimpeached character, and by no means an unſuitable match for her.—Then what could be her reaſon for marrying clandeſtinely? was Conſtance's queſtion.—I ſuppoſe, ſaid Lady Maria, a fear of being refuſed if it was propoſed to Lord Ormington, and the diſagreeable life ſhe led at home. Lady Ormington died when her children were very young, and his lordſhip finding it neceſſary to take a miſtreſs into the houſe, was prevailed on by his friends to ſend his daughter to ſchool; there ſhe was kept as long as there could be any excuſe for it,

it, and was then taken home to live in a moſt uncomfortable way, with no other ſociety than a governeſs, and no amuſements but what ſhe found out for herſelf: ſhe had an apartment allotted her, and a coach kept for her, in which ſhe was ſuffered to go every day for an airing in Hyde Park, with her governeſs; and this was the only occaſion on which ſhe went out. Her father had indeed ſo much prudence as to take another houſe for his miſtreſs, and to place his daughter at the head of his table, but if he had company ſhe dined alone. In this ſituation it was not to be expected ſhe would long continue: the gentleman who lived in the next houſe had a brother who was come to him on a viſit; his notice was attracted by ſeeing her walk for exerciſe in a paved court behind Lord Ormington's houſe, he ſoon grew acquainted with her, and in a few months prevailed on her to go to France with him. After every thing was ſettled for the journey her courage failed, and Lord Calorne coming home, ſhe dreaded offending him, and determined to remain in her priſon; but he being again called away, and ſhe thereby reduced to her former ſolitude, ſhe once more conſented, and went off. They have not been in England ſince, nor do I imagine they will come over till their finances increaſe, but I have reaſon to think Lord Calorne has ſeen her by ſtealth.

Here the converſation was interrupted by a meſſage from Mrs. Stavenell, deſiring Lady Maria would come

to her; she and Constance went, and, after an hour's gossip, separated, Lady Maria going home, and Miss Fitzarthur to return a few morning calls.

CHAP. X.

Paternal Affection.

CONSTANCE found it impossible to pursue the scheme she had projected for avoiding continual engagements: if she staid at home Lord Farnford came, justified his intrusions by asserting that they could not involve her in the evil she apprehended from his attention to her in public, and insisted on the privilege of seeing her, as the only means of enabling him to put a restraint on his behaviour when there were witnesses of it: if she spent an evening in Portman-square, she was sure of seeing him; in short, she found herself obliged to accompany Mrs. Stavenell, in order to avoid his more particular importunity, or to write to Marstonbury to desire she might be recalled. This, on many accounts, she was particularly averse to; her situation, notwithstanding its inconveniences, had charms; she expected Lord Reycolm in a few days, and she knew that by so violent a measure Mrs. Stavenell must be offended; she therefore

contented herſelf with telling Lord Farnford, one day when he was more troubleſome than uſual, what he would force her to do, and it had its effect; he altered his behaviour, and though they met at his houſe, at Mrs. Stavenell's, in public, and almoſt wherever ſhe went, ſhe had no reaſon to complain of him.

She lived on the moſt intimate terms with his ſiſters, and particularly with Lady Maria, who would not ſuffer her when ſhe called to uſe ſo much ceremony as ſending in her name: if I am at home ſaid ſhe, I am to you; and you generally can tell where to find me. To comply with this friendly wiſh to diſpence with all formality, Conſtance uſed the liberty ſhe gave her, and one morning, Lady Maria having been ill and confined to the houſe for ſome days, ſhe took her work, and went to ſit with her: ſhe found in the room with her a young woman whom ſhe had never before ſeen, and whoſe appearance excited her attention: ſhe was pretty, but had a melancholy countenance, and it was eaſy to perceive ſhe had been crying: on Lady Maria's lap there lay a little baby, not above four or five months old, which ſeemed to belong to the ſtranger.—What ſaid Conſtance, after the firſt ſalutations, Lady Maria nurſing!—Indeed I am, her ladyſhip replied, and I will ſhew you one of the loveliеſt babies you ever ſaw—I know you love children. She then turned the child round to Miſs Fitzarthur, who ſtruck

with its beauty, took it in her arms, and went towards the window to admire it: when she was on the other side of the room she heard the young woman offer to go, and Lady Maria desire her not; for that Lord Farnford would be there in a minute: I have sent for him, said she, and he does not know you are here.—Imagining she might possibly interrupt further conversation, Constance went into the adjoining room with the baby, who seemed perfectly happy with its new nurse:

Lord Farnford presently came into the room she had quitted, and in a tone of familiarity and surprise, said to the stranger—Ha! is it you?—She replied in a low voice, and Lady Maria then said—Miss Fitzarthur is just come in.; she is nursing Edward in the next room.—Lord Farnford came to her, and addressed her with—Why madam! Edward is honoured, you make a charming nurse; 'tis a pity Lord Reycolm is not here to see you.—She answered him with observing on the beauty of her little charge, but he paying no attention to her commendation, said carelessly—I have seen the young gentleman often enough, he is no novelty to me. Lady Maria came to fetch the child, and the mother presently after went away with it.

The natural observation, when Constance had parted with her play thing, was—What a sweet baby it is! and the consequent question—Whose is it?—Lady Maria said nothing, but looked at her brother, who replied:—It is that young woman's who

who brought it.—How nicely it was dreſſed! ſaid Conſtance.—Yes, anſwered Lady Maria, it's father can afford to keep it nicely dreſt.—Maria, ſaid Lord Farnford, looking ſeriouſly, you have betrayed me, I am ſure.—Indeed, ſhe returned, you are miſtaken.—There is ſome myſtery, ſaid Conſtance, belongs to this little one; I muſt not aſk any more queſtions.—You may, replied his lordſhip, ſay what you pleaſe about it; I am ſure Maria has told you.

At this inſtant a ſervant came in and whiſpered Lord Farnford, who anſwered:—Tell her I am engaged; I cannot come to her.—You are not engaged, replied his ſiſter; how can you be ſo cruel? go to her, or I proteſt ſhe ſhall come here again.—His lordſhip muttered, and evidently diſpleaſed went out of the room.

Why ſurely, ſaid Conſtance, I cannot have aſked an improper queſtion! I did wrong, I fear, to ſay any thing about the child.—My brother would perhaps think ſo, anſwered Lady Maria; but I am always glad when he is ſo puſhed.—Why, who is this baby then? Conſtance aſked.—I am ſorry to ſay, replied her ladyſhip, that it is his: The young woman that you ſaw here is it's mother; ſhe wants to ſpeak to Lord Farnford, and you may perceive how *willingly* he goes to her, and yet I aſſure you he was fond of her to exceſs till very lately; he now grows indifferent to her, and ſlights her ſhamefully. I have ſuffered

more uneaſineſs from this than from all his other amours; for, however oddly it may ſound, I muſt confeſs myſelf in a great meaſure the occaſion of this connection.—That is impoſſible I am ſure, ſaid Conſtance.—I will prove it to you, rejoined Lady Maria, though indeed my part in the buſineſs was innocent, and my intentions were good: one of the ſiſters of this young woman was a ſchool-fellow of mine, and from ſimilarity of diſpoſition we ſoon grew attached, and were in each others confidence: I learned that ſhe was educated at the expence of a diſtant relation, and that, though her father had a peerage, his finances was inadequate to the decent maintenance of a very numerous family: this girl, who is now not nineteen, was at the time of my leaving ſchool, about five years old, and I prevailed on her father and mother to reſign the care of her to me: I ſent her to ſupply my place; but, as we then lived with Mrs. Stavenell, ſhe ſpent her holydays always at home, where I had the inexpreſſible pleaſure of providing for her, and have many letters from her, telling me ſhe had overgrown her frocks, or wanted a new pair of ſhoes. When my brother came home from his tour we were to keep houſe together, and I ſhould have been very happy in having my ward with me, but I ſoon found it would be dangerous to let him ſee her: I therefore continued her at ſchool till ſhe was ſixteen, and reſiſted all her fond importunity to live with me when

ſhe

ſhe left it; but all my caution was vain, he ſoon got ſcent of her, and her father, hoping he would marry her, ſuffered him to viſit her: I then found it uſeleſs to keep her at a diſtance, and tried all I could do to fortify her, by propheſying what has ſince proved true, againſt his intreaties. I might as well have been ſilent; I am afraid I was counteracted by ſome who ought to have ſupported me; it was impoſſible to make her diſtruſt him, and ſhe now rues it. Her near relations have deſerted her, and ſhe is placed with an aunt a little way out of town, where ſhe lives on an allowance from my brother, for whom ſhe retains an affection that ſeems to increaſe as he ſlights her. I would not be thought to *encourage* people in her predicament, but conſidering myſelf as bound, in ſome meaſure, to take care of her, I will always afford her what comfort I can, and indeed for her own ſake I would do it, as I am convinced a ſuſceptible heart is her greateſt fault. Is it not a pity, Miſs Fitzarthur, that after all the pains I have taken with her to improve one of the moſt elegant female minds that ever inhabited beauty, to cultivate every good principle, and to eradicate every foible, I ſhould be ſo defeated, and my ſweet girl ſo branded? But theſe things are not thought of here: to ruin the peace of an innocent creature is but gallantry in the opinion of young men of faſhion.

As Lady Maria ſaid theſe words her brother came in again.—Well, ſaid he, does Miſs Fitzar

thur know Edward's pedigree; has ſhe heard how his father and mother are reſpectively allied? what marriages and intermarriages and deſcendants there have been in every branch and from every branch of the family? I dare ſay Lady Maria has been a very good herald; You are always very kind to me, continued he to his ſiſter, you never fail to expoſe me; but Miſs Fitzarthur will make allowances, and not be ſo ſevere on me as you are.—Without a compliment, returned Conſtance, I ſhould ſuſpect I erred if I differed from Lady Maria's opinion, and in ſuch a caſe ſurely no allowance can be made.—Do not be ſo cruel, ſaid Lord Farnford; as for Maria ſhe is moſt unmerciful.—Indeed, Conſtance anſwered, I cannot think you deſerve any mercy.—Well, replied his lordſhip, this need not be the ſubject of our diſcourſe: I aſſure you I hear enough of it; you have been brought up in a nunnery, and ſo think a vaſt deal more of ſuch things than they deſerve; hut you will ſoon find I am not ſingular: how will you Miſs Fitzarthur undertake to ſay your Lord Reycolm may not at this moment have half a dozen ſuch claimants?—God forbid he ſhould have one, ſaid Conſtance; if I find he has, I ſhall beg to be releaſed from my engagement; but if ſuch connections are common they are nevertheleſs infamous.—Nonſence, replied his lordſhip, affecting to laugh at her: why I am better than half the world, for I have ſettled an annuity on my brat; he is very well off, and Maria is very

fond

fond of him: as for my ſiſter Emma ſhe would not ſee him for the univerſe; I ſuppoſe ſhe is afraid any body ſhould ſay it is her's, for Mrs. Stavenell ſays it is very much like her.—What, ſaid Conſtance, does Mrs. Stavenell know how rich you are?—Oh yes, anſwered he, all the world knows it; Mrs. Stavenell has often nurſed him.

Conſtance concluded her viſit, and went home aſtoniſhed at Lord Farnford's libertiniſm and effrontery. No wiſh was manifeſted that his crime were retrievable; no painful remembrance was excited: he ſpoke with no tenderneſs of her he had injured; but in all he ſaid endeavoured to juſtify himſelf. More diſguſted than ever with him, and pleaſed with the exalted generoſity of Lady Maria's character, ſhe heartily rejoiced that her obligation to Lord Reycolm permitted her enjoying the friendſhip of the ſiſter ſecure from the addreſſes of the brother.

Notwithſtanding it was apparent from the alteration in Lord Farnford's conduct that all his hopes reſpecting Miſs Fitzarthur were at an end, and ſhe had every reaſon to believe he had gained that victory over himſelf which was neceſſary to her living in a tolerable ſtate of peace, his younger ſiſter was his unwearied advocate, till Conſtance intimated that a continuance of ſuch importunity as ſhe had hitherto ſubmitted to, would force her to quit London: ſhe then was ſilent on the ſubject, but as if ſhe had wanted ſome topic to replace that

which was prohibited, acquainted Conſtance with her partiality for Lord Calorne: a full perſuaſion ſeemed to occupy her ladyſhip's mind that he was much attached to her, but that he delighted to torment her; and ſhe began pumping to know what he ſaid of her. Conſtance endeavoured to recollect whether in the two viſits he had made her he had ever ſpoken of Lady Emma, but ſhe did not remember it: this the latter attributed to forgetfulneſs; her hope ſeemed too well founded to be ſhaken, and ſhe was very ſolicitous to impreſs on Conſtance's mind his cruelty in affecting to diſregard her. She talked till ſhe prevailed on her hearer to pity though ſhe condemned her weakneſs; the happineſs of her life evidently depended on Lord Calorne, whoſe motive for behaving as ſhe repreſented, ſuppoſing her not to be ſanguine in her expectations, was not eaſily diſcoverable; Lady Emma now condeſcended to aſk how in her place Miſs Fitzarthur would act, and received for anſwer, that ſhe would, whatever it coſt her, ſlight Lord Calorne. This was harſh doctrine to a mind ſo enervated and ſo prejudiced; but ſhe promiſed to follow it, and artfully endeavoured to engage her adviſer to become a mediator between them; but in this ſhe failed; it was an office of which under the beſt circumſtances Conſtance was not ambitious, and, therefore, referring her to the method ſhe had propoſed, ſhe aſſured her nothing could be ſo effectual: a diſcloſure of her griefs ſeemed to have relieved

relieved Lady Emma's mind, and she again promised to obey her injunctions.

But however good her intentions might be, her ladyship failed most egregiously in the execution: Constance frequently met her and Lord Calorne in the same company, and soon discovered her difficulty to assume a degree of haughtiness, which, as it was unnatural, was perfectly ridiculous, and insupportable: a word, a look, from Lord Calorne threw down all the structure raised on this unstable foundation: her affected reserve was laughed at, and Mrs. Stavenell's means to forward the match, on which she seemed every day more bent, were so opposite to what Constance had prescribed, that it was impossible to sustain her newly assumed character; beside this all in the circle of her acquaintance were included in her confidence, and Lord Calorne must have been not only blind, but deaf, if he had not been sensible how highly he was favoured by Lady Emma Peryton.

It was with concern that Constance saw her perpetually exposing herself to contempt and ridicule by her obvious partiality: Lord Calorne was to her, and to all polite, but there was nothing in his behaviour that indicated a distinction of any kind. Lady Emma now accounted for what she termed his *slighting* her, by supposing that some one who had got at her sentiments had betrayed her to him, and that this encouraged him to affect a disregard of her. Such a breach of confidence, with

reſpect to her ladyſhip, could not have been attended with any aggravating circumſtances; ſhe was not ſcrupulous in her choice of thoſe ſhe admitted to her confidence, nor was ſhe laviſh of her injunctions to ſecrecy; and it was as probable that what ſhe communicated might be told by others as well with a view to ſerve, as to hurt her intereſt: but the interpoſition of a third perſon was unneceſſary; Lady Emma's eyes, Lady Emma's countenance, and the whole of Lady Emma's unguarded conduct ſufficiently evinced the ſtate of her mind.

CHAP. XI.

GENEROSITY.

THE expectation of Lord Reycolm's return excited in Conſtance's mind no emotion ſo great as that of fear, leſt in his abſence he ſhould have formed ideas of her which on their meeting would be diſappointed: ſhe, however, was obliged to bear the raillery of Mrs. Stavenell, who ſeemed unable to conceive that two young people under ſuch circumſtances, could be leſs than immoderately rejoiced at the proſpect of ſeeing each other: her niece endeavoured by a candid avowal of her ſentiments, and by profeſſing without diſguiſe that Lord

Reycolm's return would give her great pleaſure, to blunt the edge of her wit; but it would not do: Mrs. Stavenell would not believe her ſincere in ſaying that whatever anxiety ſhe felt on the occaſion was ſuch as the expectation of meeting a brother would excite; Lord Reycolm and Miſs Fitzarthur were profeſſedly and avowedly lovers, and without conſidering that there is indeed a wide difference between a voluntary and a directed choice, ſhe concluded that they muſt be violently enamoured: if Conſtance was ſilent, ſhe was thinking of Lord Reycolm; if her ſpirits were raiſed, the hope of ſeeing him was the occaſion; ſo that in her own defence ſhe was obliged to wiſh for his arrival, to releaſe her from a very troubleſome, though good humoured perſecution.

In his laſt letter he had named the day of his intended return to London. Mrs. Stavenell was ſo thoroughly convinced that, as he knew where Miſs Fitzarthur was, her houſe would be the firſt he viſited, that ſhe put herſelf to ſome inconvenience to ſtay at home that day, in order that ſhe might be preſent at a meeting which ſhould verify her ſagacity.

As the hour of his arrival was uncertain dinner was ſent up without waiting for him: every carriage that was within hearing was now thought to be his, but the evening came, and midnight came without Lord Reycolm. Mrs. Stavenell was certain nothing leſs than ſome terrible accident could have

have detained him; but Conſtance, who did not think a ſignification of an intention, poſitively obligatory, concluded that ſhe ſhould ſoon know the cauſe of his ſtay, and reſted ſatisfied.

The week elapſed without any intelligence of him, and ſhe began to be uneaſy: the arrival of Mr. Stavenell was now equally expected, and news came of him firſt: on his landing at Dover he diſpatched a letter to his mother, of which this is an extract.

'An accident has obliged me to delay my journey to town, and the pleaſure of ſeeing you a few days longer than I at firſt intended.—I told you in my laſt that for the ſake of ſeeing ſome friends, I ſhould remain a ſhort time at Calais: I had been there four days, and had juſt returned one evening to the inn, intending to ſail the next day, when on entering my room I ſaw, lying on the ground, a note, which I immediately concluded had been put under the door: I took it up; it was directed for me, and was to the following purport.

"Sir,

"I hear you are Engliſh and a gentleman.—I am "in want of protection, will you come into the "gallery at eight this evening.

"Your moſt obedient ſervant,

"A. R."

'It was within a few minutes of the time appointed, and I went to the gallery, not knowing whom or what I was to meet, but gueſſed, by the hand

'in

'in which the requeſt was written, that it was a 'lady.—The clock had juſt ſtruck when I heard a 'door open behind me:—I turned round, but the 'place was ſo dark I could only perceive my con-'jecture was right:—I went towards her, and ſaw 'ſhe was in a riding dreſs, and followed by a wo-'man whom I ſuppoſed her ſervant.—My curioſity 'was excited;—I ſpoke to the lady, ſaid I was de-'ſired to be there at that time; and begged to know 'if it was from her that I had received a billet.—'ſhe held a handkerchief before her face, as if de-'ſirous to conceal it, and in a very low voice an-'ſwered, it was ſhe who had requeſted to ſee me: 'I found by her accent, though ſhe ſpoke good 'Engliſh, that ſhe was French, and endeavoured by 'aſſurances that whatever aſſiſtance I could afford 'her ſhe might command, to give her confidence 'which ſhe ſeemed much to want: ſhe then told 'me that ſhe was going to England, that a gentle-'man who was to accompany her, had promiſed to 'meet her there for the purpoſe, but had diſap-'pointed her;—that ſhe had waited for him three 'days;—that ſhe had now no hopes of his coming, 'and meant, if I would protect her during the 'paſſage, to ſail without him:—if it was an im-'proper favour to aſk, or inconvenient to me to 'grant, ſhe would, ſhe ſaid return to Paris.

'A requeſt which was in itſelf, and in the man-'ner of making it ſo modeſt, and in effect a com-'pliment to me, I could not have refuſed to any

'one:

'one:—to a lady under ſuch diſtreſſing circum-
'ſtances to have heſitated a moment would have
'been brutality:—by her deſire I ſaw her no more
'till we were to ſail, and then accompanied her
'to the Packet. On inquiring of her what was
'her ſcheme of action, I learnt that ſhe had an
'uncle in London, to whom ſhe propoſed writing,
'and to whoſe houſe ſhe would immediately, on
'receiving an anſwer from him, go: I there-
'fore offered to poſtpone my journey to town till
'then; ſhe at firſt declined it, but on my inſiſting
'on it, and repreſenting to her that ſhe ſtill ſtood
'in need of a protector, ſhe accepted my propoſal,
'and on its arrival I ſhall ſet off with her. She is
'juſt come into the room to know what ſhe muſt do
'with her letter: I tell her I am writing to you
'about her, and aſk by what name I muſt deſcribe
'her:—ſhe ſays Adelaide, which is the only name
'ſhe chuſes to reveal.'

Mrs. Stavenell, though ſhe was vexed at an acci-
dent that poſtponed her ſeeing her ſon, could not
but approve his conduct, while her niece, whoſe
heart was ever ready to applaud benevolence, was
laviſh in his praiſe. In a few days after the receipt
of this intelligence, one of Mr. Stavenell's ſervants
who had travelled with him, arrived in town, and
brought the following letter to Mrs. Stavenell.

'The poſt does not travel faſt enough for me:
'if I wait for it I muſt defer the pleaſure of ſeeing
'my deareſt mother ſome hours longer than is ab-
'ſolutely

'ſolutely neceſſary: I have therefore diſpatched 'my man with this, to appriſe you of my being, 'at the time you receive it, on the road, and I 'hope in three hours after his arrival to be with 'you.

'The letter Mademoiſelle Adelaide wrote to her 'uncle has been anſwered, but not by him: he is 'dead, and his executor is a ſtranger to her. The 'diſtreſs this information has occaſioned her is in-'conceivable, from which, and the reluctance ſhe 'manifeſts to return home, I gueſs ſhe has left her 'friends privately, and I am inclined to think there 'is a lover in the caſe, but this is mere ſurmiſe: 'ſhe ſays ſhe has no alternative; ſhe muſt return to 'France, but ſhe cannot, till ſhe has written to her 'relations there. I own her appearance and be-'haviour have intereſted me much for her, and I 'have raſhly, and perhaps imprudently offered her 'a temporary aſylum in your houſe: with you, 'therefore may I beg ſhe may remain till her let-'ters are anſwered; otherwiſe, as I cannot think 'myſelf juſtified in leaving ſuch a young woman ſo 'expoſed, I muſt ſtay here with her, till ſhe is in a 'ſtate of greater ſecurity:—But, having every rea-'ſon to believe you will readily comply with this 'requeſt, I ſhall without waiting a return, ſet out, 'and preſent to you and Miſs Fitzarthur, whom I 'ſuppoſe to be with you, my inconnüe; for I yet 'know her by no other name than that of Adelaide, 'and ſo cautious was ſhe, that her letter from Lon-

'don

'don was directed to her by that name only: what 'this augurs I cannot at preſent diſcover, but I am 'firmly perſuaded it is no ill:—I know the idea 'that ſuggeſts itſelf to you is either that your ſa-'pient ſon is taken in, or that he chuſes this me-'thod of introducing a daughter-in-law to you: the 'latter is foundationleſs, I aſſure you; as for the 'former, I own it is not impoſſible that after hav-'ing eſcaped impoſition on the other ſide of the 'water, my credulity may be played on in the Bri-'tiſh dominions; at this however I am not at all 'concerned: if I err, it is on the ſide of humanity, 'and if I have any ſkill in phyſiognomy I ſhall not 'repent what I have done.

'I am ſure her appearance will operate with you 'in her favour—ſhe is I imagine hardly twenty, 'more than tolerably pretty, and by no means de-'ficient in point of underſtanding and education; 'ſhe ſpeaks good Engliſh, and if one may judge by 'external appearances, is a perſon of fortune. I 'really pity the uneaſineſs I occaſion her: I am 'convinced ſhe is afraid of me, though I do all I 'can to inſpire her with confidence; ſhe is never 'with me excepting at meals, or when ſhe has any 'thing on which ſhe wiſhes to adviſe with me; and 'I have never yet ſeen her without her maid, who 'ſeems wonderfully attached to her. I like her 'caution and have told her ſo.

'Satisfied that though I may be the dupe of arti-'fice, you will admit a probability on the other

'ſide

'ſide, I ſhall venture to introduce her as what ſhe 'appears to be, and am, with the moſt affectionate 'remembrance of my couſin, and the greateſt re-'ſpect for yourſelf,

'Your very obedient ſon,

'CHARLES STAVENELL.'

Mrs. Stavenell read the letter to herſelf, and laughing heartily at it, gave it to her niece, who could not diſcover the occaſion of her mirth:—Well, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, what do you think of it?—I ought firſt, Conſtance anſwered, to know what are your ſentiments.—Why then, ſaid ſhe, I think Charles is taken in indeed:—I durſt to ſay theſe are two French Madams that had'nt money enough in their pockets to bring them to town, and ſo they thought if they could manage to make the gentleman treat 'em, why it was very clever:—but for goodneſs ſake let's ſee 'em—though may-be they'll give their beau the ſlip; ten to one they'll not come here.—Why ſhould you think ſo Madam? replied Conſtance.—Becauſe it's moſt natural to think ſo, Mrs. Stavenell returned.—I'll lay my life Charles's birds fly before they get here:—they'll come into London, but depend upon it not here; they'll make ſome excuſe to get away, or take a French leave of him, and the girls will be delighted to think how nice they took him in: but if they do come, why I ſhall be very glad to ſee them.

The difficulty which thoſe of ingenuous natures, and

and who are unacquainted with the deceits of the world, find to believe others can design to impose on them, inclined Conſtance rather to ſuſpect her aunt's judgment, than to think with her: ſhe concluded that this was ſome unhappy young woman who deſerved regard; and, deſirous to know if it was not in her power to ſoften whatever diſtreſs ſhe might labour under, ſhe waited for Mr. Stavenell's arrival with much leſs patience than for Lord Reycolm's, whom in this new expectation Mrs. Stavenell, to her great relief, ſeemed almoſt to have forgotten. Preparations for the reception of Mr. Stavenell and his ward were immediately made, his mother nevertheleſs imagining all care for the latter, though it was neceſſary, was ſuperfluous.

CHAP. XII.

DISTRESS.

ABOUT ſix o'clock in the evening expectation ceaſed. Mr. Stavenell arrived, and entered the room *alone*: after the firſt congratulations and expreſſions of joy were over, Conſtance's hopes ſinking and her fears riſing, Mr. Stavenell aſked his mother if ſhe had received his letter: being anſwered that ſhe had, before either of the ladies could make

make any inquiries, he ſaid—Then I may introduce Mademoiſelle; I could not prevail on her to come in till I had ſeen you, leſt by any accident my man ſhould not have been arrived.--He then went down to fetch her, and Conſtance, who felt for the aukwardneſs of her ſituation, followed him, that ſhe might leſſen her embarraſſment by meeting her: the ſtranger gueſt was in the hall when Miſs Fitzarthur reached it: ſhe took her hand, and with expreſſions of the ſincereſt welcome led her to Mrs. Stavenell, who could ſcarcely forbear telling her how ſhe had been deceived in her opinion of her. Every inſtance of kindneſs was received by the ſtranger with polite gratitude, while Conſtance who wanted no other recommendation of her than her being diſtreſſed, buſied herſelf iu adjuſting her baggage in her chamber, and in endeavours to render the novelty of the ſcene leſs irkſome to her.

Mrs. Stavenell's curioſity was excited to know ſomething of her ſtory, and more than Adelaide thought proper to reveal; ſhe ſaid little, appeared thoughtful, and melancholy, and the tears frequently ſtood in her eyes. However in the courſe of the evening, fortunately no viſitors coming in, ſhe grew encouraged by the reception ſhe had met with, her timidity leſſened, and ſhe ſeemed inclined to gratify the impatience which Mrs Stavenell could neither ſuppreſs nor conceal: ſhe confeſſed that ſhe had left her mother's houſe under a pretence of viſiting a relation at Calais, but really with

with an intention of coming to England; ſhe added that ſhe had been puniſhed for her fault, for that ſhe had been moſt cruelly deceived.

The little ſhe communicated did not anſwer the purpoſe of allaying curioſity; and Mrs. Stavenell aſked ſo many queſtions that Conſtance heartily pitied Adelaide's ſituation: at length after ſupper, finding herſelf embarraſſed, and, as if fearing a miſconſtruction of her reſerve, ſhe ſaid that as ſhe could not doubt the honour of thoſe who had already been ſo generous to her, ſhe would not make a ſecret of the occaſion of her coming to England, and hoped that in return for her confidence, ſhe ſhould meet with advice how ſhe ſhould act. Mrs, Stavenell who would at any time have purchaſed this amuſement, joined by her ſon and niece, aſſured her ſhe might depend on the moſt inviolable ſecrecy, and all the advice and aſſiſtance they could give her: ſhe then, after a little heſitation, ſaid:

'I am a native of Paris, and my name is Rouſ-
'ſon: my father was of a reſpected proteſtant fa-
'mily, and at the head of one of the firſt mercantile
'houſes in France; he has been dead near three
'years, and I am his only child: a few months be-
'fore his death he became acquainted with a gentle-
'man who was travelling through our country,
'and who moſt unhappily for me, choſe me as the
'object of his regard; this gentleman afterwards
'left us, and I ſaw him no more till about half a
'year ago: he then returned to Paris, renewed his

'acquaintance

'acquaintance, and seeing that the loss of my fa-
'ther was indeed a most severe one to me, he pre-
'vailed on my weakness and credulity to consent to
'accompany him to London, where I expected to
'find my father's brother, who I knew would wil-
'lingly receive me.

'I was induced to this ill-judged determination
'equally by my hope of finding happiness there,
'and by the certainty that I could never expect a
'minute's comfort at home: my mother though an
'English woman, is in consequence of a foreign
'education, of the Roman church, and soon after
'the death of my father married a gentleman of the
'same persuasion: the natural consequence of this
'was my living in a state of continual persecution;
'all means were tried to prevail on me to become
'a convert to their opinions, but as my father, per-
'haps foreseeing this, had taken the utmost care to
'confirm me in the principles in which I had been
'educated, I withstood their attempts. I do not
'pretend to say that this was the motive to my
'leaving my native country, but it was a strong
'persuasive aided by my own inclination.

'My mother had a sister who lived within a few
'miles of Calais, whose religious principles were
'the same as her's: thither I was invited, but as
'I knew the purpose for which I was to go, I had
'for a long time evaded it: I now accepted it as a
'means of escape from my mother's house; and it
'was agreed between him who has so deceived me

and

'and myſelf, that he ſhould meet me at a ſmall 'diſtance from my aunt's, that we ſhould then go 'on to Calais, and embark in the next Packet for 'England; but he was not at the place appointed: 'my averſion again to encounter perſecution, and 'a hope that I might meet him at Calais, urged me 'to proceed: I came to the inn at which I knew 'we were to wait the ſailing of the veſſel; there, 'half mad with terror and vexation, my reſolution 'not to return home ſtill moſt unreaſonably in-'creaſing; without a creature whoſe face I had 'ever ſeen, excepting my maid, I remained three 'days. I then determined to ſail in the next Pac-'ket, if any ladies were going—in this I 'was diſappointed, there were no ladies, and I 'could not learn the name of any paſſenger but 'Mr. Stavenell, an Engliſh Gentleman: a thought 'ſuggeſted itſelf that I might aſk his protection; I 'was grown ſo deſperate that I could not judge be-'tween propriety and impropriety, and I took the 'unpardonable liberty of writing to him: how 'troubleſome I have ſince been to him is too well 'known.'

And pray ſaid Mr. Stavenell when ſhe ceaſed, not to talk of trouble, for I gratified myſelf much more than I could aſſiſt you, what do you purpoſe doing?—you cannot think of returning to Paris!—I muſt, replied Adelaide; but, if I might have permiſſion to remain here a few days, I would not do it till I have written to my mother, and made

ſome

ſome conditions on which I might ſafely return.—Mrs. Stavenell, who was too much pleaſed with the oddity of this adventure to think of parting with her gueſt, ſaid it muſt not be,—ſhe muſt not write, ſhe ſhould be her viſitor for months to come, and added,—I am ſure my niece's face ſays you muſt not go. Conſtance joined her wiſhes to Mrs. Stavenell's invitation, and Adelaide accepted it till ſhe could return, ſecure from all the evils ſhe had endured, to her mother.

It was very unwillingly that Conſtance ſubmit- to the neceſſary ſeparation at the hour of reſt: ſhe accompanied Adelaide to her chamber, where her maid was waiting for her; and as the girl underſtood not one word of Engliſh, her preſence was no reſtraint on half an hour's converſation; the ladies parted with mutual regret, and with a reciprocal promiſe that ſhe who roſe firſt ſhould awake the other.

In the morning Conſtance went into Mademoiſelle Rouſſon's chamber, and found her riſing; as ſoon as ſhe was dreſt and they were alone, Adelaide ſaid ſhe had a requeſt to make which ſhe hoped would not be refuſed her: this was that her being in England might be kept ſecret, that therefore ſhe might be called only by her chriſtian name, and be ſuffered to retire when any viſitors came to the houſe. With this Conſtance ſaid ſhe did not doubt her aunt would very readily comply, and ſhe would mention it to her. At breakfaſt ſhe perſormed her pro-

miſe, and it was agreed that Mademoiſelle ſhould be known by no other name than Adelaide.

She wrote that day to tell her mother where ſhe was, and to offer, on condition ſhe might remain unmoleſted on religious ſubjects, to return to her immediately: ſhe ſhewed her letter to Mr. Stavenell, who having conſidered it, ſaid he feared the ſending it would be attended with danger:—What, ſaid he, would you do, if inſtead of an anſwer to this letter, people ſhould be ſent to demand you, and take you home? we could not juſtify detaining you:—you had therefore better let me write to your friends, and that they may not know where to ſeek you, their anſwer ſhall be directed to me at the inn at Dover where you were, and I will write by the ſame poſt to Mrs. Belchier to deſire it may be forwarded to me.—This ſcheme was adopted, and immediately put in execution.

Although Conſtance wiſhed that Adelaide's mother might be diſpoſed to receive her, ſhe could not without regret think of loſing the pleaſure ſhe had ſo newly found: every hour improved her opinion of the ſtranger, and diſcovered her to be well worth the attention aud regard paid her: had her merit been leſs, pity would ſtill have been intereſted for her; but now eſteem and compaſſion were equally called on. Se had ſuffered much from the bigotry of her mother and relations; ſhe ſtill ſuffered under a conſciouſneſs of having done wrong in leaving her family clandeſtinely: but neither of theſe cauſes of

ſorrow

ſorrow was to be put in compariſon with the diſappointment ſhe had experienced: on this ſubject ſhe, when alone with Conſtance, frequently converſed; ſhe communicated to her every circumſtance of it, excepting the name of the aggreſſor, which from motives of ſtill remaining affection ſhe choſe to conceal, and her narrative excited in her friends indignation at that, which, to ſay the leaſt of it, was an act of wanton cruelty.

The attachment between the two ladies was ſo ſtrong, that as the ſecrecy one deſired made her ſtudiouſly avoid company, the other would willingly have ſhared her ſolitude; but this Conſtance could not always prevail on Adelaide to permit: from public amuſements, and in a great meaſure from other engagements, ſhe got excuſed; but ſhe could not avoid ſeeing thoſe who came to the houſe, nor omit her viſits to Lord Farnford's ſiſters. Mrs. Stavenell's inclinations now coincided with her wiſhes, ſhe was ſo fond of Mademoiſelle that ſhe in every thing conſulted her eaſe and gratification: leſt ſhe ſhould be ſurpriſed by the ſudden entrance of thoſe whoſe intimacy would not allow of ceremony, ſhe changed her ſitting-room, and both ſhe and her niece were always called out when viſitors came: when ſhe had company to dinner, a ſeparate one was provided in another room for Adelaide, and ſhe exerted herſelf ſo effectually, and impoſed ſuch ſilence on her ſervants, that her being there remained a profound ſecret.

Conſtance would, as ſhe knew ſhe might ſafely, have introduced Lady Maria Peryton to her; but the fear that if any degree of reſtraint were taken off Mrs. Stavenell, ſhe would relax the whole, deterred her, and ſhe was apprehenſive leſt any accident ſhould excite ſuſpicion in Lady Emma: for theſe reaſons ſhe gave up the additional pleaſure which ſhe might otherwiſe have derived from admitting Lady Maria.

Her time paſſed now very agreeably; Lord Farnford gave her no uneaſineſs; ſhe ſaw his ſiſters frequently, but was not obliged to perſevere in a round of diſſipation: ſhe found in Adelaide an amiable companion, and was unſpeakably happy in ſeeing her endeavours to calm her anxiety, and reconcile her to her fate were not ineffectual: Mrs. Stavenell's frequent engagements, and the pleaſure ſhe took in the ſociety of her new gueſt, ſaved her niece from much of her raillery, and nothing was wanting to complete her felicity but ſatisfaction reſpecting the cauſe of Lord Reycolm's ſtay, which now and then gave her concern.

As ſoon as it could be expected an anſwer come to Mr. Stavenell's letter: the family were at dinner when it arrived: the blood forſook Adelaide's cheeks and ſhe was in an univerſal tremor while Mr. Stavenell opened it: he glanced his eyes over it, and ſhe being unable to ſuppreſs her anxiety till he ſpoke, ſaid—Pray Sir, what—You ſhall know its contents, he replied, but you muſt firſt recollect yourſelf—it

is

is not such an answer as you wished, but be assured that every thing that can soften its severity shall be done: if your friends desert you, strangers shall supply their place.—He then gave her the letter which contained but a few lines, and was written in French by Monsieur Bermond, her father-in-law, in it he said that Mademoiselle Rousson having without any provocation left her mothers house, she could on no terms be received there again, nor did she ever desire to see her if she continued as obstinate as she had hitherto been.

The cruelty of this, which was in effect a renunciation of her, Adelaide felt deeply; but her kind friends said every thing that could comfort her: Mrs. Stavenell assured her that while she chose to continue in England, she should with her ever find a home; and her son added that since her mother or her mother's relations saw no sin in abandoning her, he, who considered himself as her protector, and responsible for what befel her, should be very cautious, if at any time they relented, of suffering her to return to a place where she could expect so little kindness.

A little raised by these expressions of friendship, Mademoiselle endeavoured to check the torrent of tears so unexpected a repulse had occasioned: she received the consolation offered her with gratitude, and listened to the arguments Mr. Stavenell used to convince her that a greater misfortune than this

might have befallen her, if her relations had, under pretended kindneſs, decoyed her home.

CHAP. XIII.

PERPLEXITY.

MADEMOISELLE Rouſſon had now experienced the bleſſings of friendſhip and hoſpitality near a fortnight, in which time ſhe had become poſſeſſed of the confidence of Miſs Fitzarthur, and in return had imparted every particular of her misfortunes, excepting that which ſhe begged permiſſion to conceal, the name of him who had deſerted her: whatever communications ſhe made increaſed the affection of Conſtance, the proſpect of whoſe marriage was rendered pleaſing to her by the hope that ſhe ſhould enjoy Adelaide's ſociety.

But Miſs Fitzarthur began to grow really anxious for Lord Reycolm, and to fear that ſome accident, more dreadful than ſhe had hitherto apprehended, had detained him: if it was ſuch an one as prevented his writing, it ought reaſonably to alarm her; yet it was only to Mademoiſelle Rouſſon that ſhe dared expreſs any uneaſineſs: had ſhe ingenuouſly told

told Mrs. Stavenell what she felt, she full well knew she should draw on herself, not only her raillery, but the ridicule of many whom her aunt would studiously inform of this corroboration of her suspicions, which had always instructed her to believe her niece dissembled.

The suspence which Lord Reycolm's want of punctuality occasioned, and her fears for his safety were increased by Lord Drumferne's writing to Mrs. Stavenell to know whether she had heard of him, and expressing his wonder at his silence and his stay: anxiety was however in a few days lessened: but perplexity increased. Lord Farnford called one morning at Mrs. Stavenell's, and as soon as Miss Fitzarthur entered the room—What will you give me, Madam, said he, for the very best intelligence you can receive?—Have you it to sell? returned Constance.—Yes, he replied; when you hear it you will own I had:—Lord Reycolm is in town.—In town! she repeated, while the colour rose in her cheeks:—are you sure of it? Lord Farnford.—Nay, my dear Madam, said he, do not be so alarmed: I dare say you will see him soon:—why I have quite lighted up your countenance:—if I had known how *very* deeply you were interested, I would have been more cautious.—Poor thing, interrupted Mrs. Stavenell, who was the only person beside Lord Farnford present with Constance, she has been very miserable a long while, but she would not own: she thought as every body was blind but

herſelf.—I own, replied her niece, that I was at firſt ſurpriſed at what Lord Farnford ſaid, and I dare ſay ma'm, if you had not heard it before, you were equally ſo.—O yes, my dear, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, I was vaſtly ſurpriſed:—did'nt I look very red and very pale? Lord Farnford, juſt as ſhe did. —Not quite in ſo great a degree, he replied laughing, but you muſt make allowances:—conſider.—I do conſider, reſumed Mrs. Stavenell, and all I am angry at is ſhe's ſo ſly ſhe won't own it.—What would you have me own? replied Conſtance, heartily vexed at the folly and impertinence with which ſhe was beſet.—The truth, ſaid her aunt, and not pretend as you don't care for Lord Reycolm.—I do not pretend, anſwered Conſtance, that I do not care for him; but really you think I deceive you when I ſpeak my real ſentiments:—but pray, ſaid ſhe, addreſſing herſelf to Lord Farnford, when was he in town?—You ſhall know, Madam, returned her informer, with an affected and ridiculous gravity; as preciſely as I can tell you.—It was not I, but a gentleman of my acquaintance, who met him, I believe, in Bond-ſtreet—no, let me be right, it was in Albemarle-ſtreet: upon my honour I cannot recollect at this inſtant which ſtreet it was in; but I am rather inclined to think, from ſome circumſtances, that it was Bond-ſtreet, I can inquire and let you know.—I will, if you pleaſe, get it in writing under the hand of the perſon who ſaw him. —I ſuppoſe, ſaid Conſtance, to whom his wit was

not

not near ſo agreeable as to Mrs. Stavenell, your lordſhip choſe to forget the queſtion I aſked was *when* Lord Reycolm was in town, not where he was met.—I beg your pardon, replied Lord Farnford:—indeed, Miſs Fitzarthur, it is time Lord Reycolm ſhould come, that we may ſee you ſmile again; but I will tell you as exactly as poſſible, at this diſtance of time, for I had my intelligence above an hour ago.—I believe, if my memory does not fail me, but I will not be reſponſible for the correctneſs of the account, that it muſt have been about forty-ſix minutes paſt three, *poſt meridian*, on Tueſday the eighth of the preſent month.—How much your lordſhip's wit had been obliged to you, anſwered Conſtance, with a ſmile of contempt, for ſparing it ſo uſeleſs an exertion, had you only ſaid on Tueſday! that would abundantly have ſatisfied me.—Indeed, interpoſed Mrs. Stavenell, my dear, I muſtn't have you ſo croſs:—ſuppoſe my Lord had a fancy to divert himſelf, pray where's the great harm of it? but as he ſays, we ſhall all be glad when Lord Reycolm comes.—Oh, ſaid his lordſhip, Miſs Fitzarthur muſt be excuſed,—you muſt not be ſo ſevere.—Come, Madam, I will take your part: let me be your advocate.—When I ſtand in need of ſuch an one, ſaid Conſtance, endeavouring to diſguiſe her vexation, I will apply to your lordſhip, but may I beg leave to return to the employment I was called from?—How can you be ſo cruel, replied Lord Farnford, as to deprive us of the plea-

pleaſure of your company? Do you think I can ſtay after you are gone?—Fie, my lord, Mrs. Stavenell interrupted: ſuppoſing ſhe ſhould tell her beau, he'll ſay, you've been a making love to his wife.—May I go? pray madam, ſaid Conſtance, to whom this was intolerable.—Aye, if you like it, replied her aunt.—She then making a ſlight courteſey to Lord Farnford, and deſiring her compliments to his ſiſters, glad to get away at any rate, flew up ſtairs to Adelaide, to whom ſhe related what had paſſed, and who, being acquainted with the obligation Conſtance was under, ſhared her ſurpriſe at hearing Lord Reycolm had been ſeen in town nearly a week before: ſhe thought it probable that he might not know where to find Conſtance; but this could not be, and ſhe was ſoon convinced of it's impoſſibility.

A ſuſpicion now aroſe in Miſs Fitzarthur's mind that his inclinations were changed, and that therefore he avoided her: to this, were it ſo, ſhe could have ſubmitted, but that which gave her the moſt uneaſineſs was the fear leſt he or his friends ſhould think the promiſe ſo binding as not to admit of an excuſe for its non-performance. She now wiſhed ſhe had aſked Lord Farnford whether any reaſon had been given by Lord Reycolm for his being in England without the knowledge of his Father: but her diſguſt at the folly ſhe had juſt been witneſs to was ſo great, that ſhe could not think of returning to the parlour, where he ſtill was, to procure any information:

information: ſhe had, nothing therefore left to do but to wait the event patiently.

Before dinner ſhe ſaw Mr. Stavenell alone, told him what Lord Farnford had ſaid, and aſked his opinion of the aſpect which Lord Reycolm's being privately in town wore.—I am inclined to think, Mr. Stavenell replied, that either it is a miſtake, or that Farnford had a mind to try you: but if he is in town depend on it you will ſhortly hear of him.

This prediction was ſoon fulfilled, for about a quarter of an hour before dinner time Lord Reycolm ſtopped at the door. No entreaties could prevail on Adelaide to ſtay; ſhe made it an invariable rule to retire when any one came, and ſhe adhered to it now: Mr. Stavenell, who was with his mother and Conſtance, went down to receive him. The carriage and horſes appearing to be juſt come off a journey, Conſtance immediately concluded that Lord Farnford's account was not true, and prepared herſelf, not without ſome little perturbation, to ſee him who was to be the future partner of her life. Mrs. Stavenell diverted herſelf with fancying her niece infinitely more agitated than ſhe really was, and her raillery ceaſed not till Lord Reycolm entered the room; he took her hand without ſpeaking, then quitted her, and addreſſed himſelf to Mrs. Stavenell, and returning to Conſtance, ſaid—I am ſo aſhamed of having been abſent for ſo long a time after I had given you

reaſon to expect me, that I would not increaſe my fault by deferring the pleaſure of ſeeing you five minutes longer, otherwiſe you ſhould have been appriſed of my coming: I fear you muſt have thought me very remiſs: do you forgive me?—Lord Drumferne, replied Conſtance, knows, I hope, of your being in England, he has written to my aunt.—I wrote to him, ſaid Lord Reycolm, and he knows by this time that I am come: I ſhall ſtay but a few days in London, and then go down to him.—Well, interrupted Mrs. Stavenell, I'm glad my lord, you're come, for my niece, in ſpite of all ſhe can ſay, I'm ſure ſhe's been exceſſive uneaſy, and ſo croſs! ſhe woud'n't let us ſpeak to her.

To diſengage her from the pain of being obliged to liſten to that which was obviouſly very diſagreeable to her, Mr Stavenell drew Conſtance to a little diſtance, and ſaid—Lord Farnford was either deceived himſelf, or he meant to laugh at you, for Lord Reycolm ſays he left Dover but this morning: I aſked him without repeating what I had heard, when he landed; he told me laſt night, and that he ſet out early this morning for town, ſo that you have nothing to apprehend: I know what your fears were, and ſhould have been very much hurt had any thing in his conduct given reaſon to ſuſpect he ſlighted you.

The ſuſpicion of Lord Reycolm's having been privately in town was removed from Conſtance's mind,

mind, but that he did not meet her with any extraordinary degree of pleaſure was evident: ſhe, however forbore ſaying ſo to Mr. Stavenell, leſt it might ſeem to ariſe from a conſciouſneſs of ſelf importance, or from diſappointed vanity. A few minutes converſation confirmed her in the opinion that Lord Reycolm's mind was not perfectly at eaſe: there was a reſtraint in his behaviour, a want of cordiality in his expreſſions of joy at returning to his native country, that indicated more than appeared: he ſeemed ſcarcely able to recollect himſelf, and his anſwers were often contradictory and perplexed. His looks too tended to ſtrengthen this preſumption; he was much fallen away and appeared dejected: this Mrs. Stavenell remarked to him, and he accounted for it by ſaying—that ſince he wrote to Miſs Fitzarthur, he had fallen from his horſe, and had been ſo much hurt as to make it doubtful whether he ſhould ever recover.

After a ſtay of about *twenty minutes*, to the aſtoniſhment of all, he roſe to take his leave; he was urged to ſtay dinner, but was not to be prevailed on: he ſaid he propoſed going down to his father's the next day, and when he returned would wait on Mrs. Stavenell. Before he quitted the room a ſervant came to ſummon the family to dinner, but even this did not alter his purpoſe: though he had diſmiſſed his carriage and ſervants, as if he had at firſt intended ſtaying, and it rained very faſt, he ſet out on foot, and left Mrs. Stavenell

nell, her niece, and her ſon, wholly at a loſs to account for his conduct.

Had he accepted Mrs. Stavenell's invitation, Adelaide would have dined alone; but now Conſtance went to her to fetch her.—Come mademoiſelle, ſaid ſhe, come to dinner, my lord is gone. —Gone returned Adelaide, is it poſſible?—It is indeed, Conſtance anſwered; he was preſſed to ſtay, but would not. I am afraid there is ſomething concealed, but I muſt think of it: come, my aunt waits for us. They then went down together, but Miſs Fitzarthur's appetite was entirely loſt; ſhe was ſurpriſed and hurt at what ſhe had ſeen, and fearful leſt Mrs. Stavenell ſhould begin to comment on it before the ſervants quitted the room: to avert this ſhe endeavoured to ſtart other topics, but no one ſeemed inclined to converſation, nor could ſhe ſupport it. At laſt they were left to themſelves, and Mrs. Stavenell, who had with an extraordinary degree of prudence remained ſilent, now began to expreſs her aſtoniſhment, by violent exclamations, at LordReycolm's rudeneſs in going away juſt as dinner was ſent up: if this was French manners, God keep her, ſhe ſaid. from them; for ſhe never ſaw any thing ſo abominable.—I do not think, replied her ſon, that it was ſo rude as odd; it is not his breach of civility towards us, but the apparent ſlight of Miſs Fitzarthur that ſtartles me: we ought not, however, to condemn unheard, he may be able to account for it; and indeed great allowances

ſhould

ſhould be made, for he ſeems very far from well; let us draw no concluſions till we have ſeen him again; he might be under a neceſſity of keeping ſome appointment, and might have only a few minutes to ſpare, if ſo, his coming here is an argument in his favor.—Don't talk of arguments, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, I can ſee with half an eye whether a man behaves as he ſhould do; would any body believe as Lord Reycolm had been away above three years, and my niece was to be the woman he was to be married to, to ſee him come in, juſt as if we had been all people he never ſaw before? and then when he was ſat down, and began to talk, did ever any body ſee any thing like him? I vow he ſeemed to me as if he could not ſay yea or nay.—He appeared to be ill, anſwered Mr. Stavenell, you heard him ſay he had had a fall from his horſe; you muſt not bear too hard; want of health will excuſe many things.—Aye indeed it may, returned Mrs. Stavenell, who ſeemed ſeriouſly to reſent his behaviour, and in whoſe opinion Conſtance could not but concur; but it will never excuſe this, nor you ſhan't perſuade me that becauſe perhaps he had the head-ach, he cou'dn't ſay—I'm glad to ſee ye.—I admit what you ſay, Mr. Stavenell replied, but let me beg of you not to draw concluſions till you have ſeen him again.—You may do as you pleaſe for that ſaid his mother, but thoughts are free, and I ſhall do as I like about it.—What do you ſay to it, Miſs Fitzarthur?—I am inclined,

ſaid

ſaid Conſtance, to follow Mr. Stavenell's example, and ſuſpend my judgement till I ſee farther: Lord Reycolm can moſt probably give a very ſatisfactory reaſon for what ſurpriſes us, and, if it is not the reſult of any offence I have given him, I ſhall reſt ſatisfied.

Mrs. Stavenell was not at all diſpoſed to ſubmit to this ſuſpenſion of her judgment, ſhe ſtill perſiſted in exclaiming at Lord Reycolm's rudeneſs, and ſeemed not a little vexed that neither her ſon or niece joined her; the reſentment of the latter ſhe did all in her power to excite, repreſenting his behaviour as deſignedly affronting, calling to her remembrance his want of punctuality in the time of his return, and exaggerating every circumſtance. Conſtance heard her without interruption, and when ſhe ceaſed, wiſhing to get rid of the converſation, ſhe ſaid, that were it only from Lord Reycolm's viſit that ſhe were to judge, ſhe ſhould imagine his coolneſs the conſequence of a change of ſentiments, but that as he had deferred his journey till ſo long after the time he named for it, ſhe ſuppoſed affairs of importance had detained him, and might ſtill occupy his mind; but that whether this, or illneſs, or any other reaſon were to be aſſigned for it, the acquieſcing in Mr. Stavenell's charitable determination not to condemn unheard could be productive of no bad conſequences, and was juſtice, to which not only Lord Reycolm but all the world was entitled.—I have heard ſay, replied

plied Mrs. Stavenell to her niece, that they that will bear ill uſage, deſerves to be ill uſed; and if you like ſuch behaviour well and good; but I know that if I was as you I would never ſee Lord Reycolm again.—O madam, madam, ſaid her ſon, you muſt not talk ſo: I hope my couſin will ſee him, and ſuffer him to account for theſe unfavourable appearances.—I will give him credit for behaving to her, and to every body with honour: do not be too harſh. Notwithſtanding all that was ſaid, Mrs. Stavenell would not give up. Adelaide who had borne no part in the converſation now quitted the room, and Conſtance preſently after followed her.

Though her temper was naturally mild, ſhe was not without paſſions; and ſhe could not but be offended at the coldneſs and extreme indifference which Lord Reycolm had manifeſted: what Mrs. Stavenell had ſaid ſhe owned to Adelaide had more reaſon with it than ſhe dared while with her to allow: ill health might have excuſed him from ſeeing her, but ſurely if he was able to expreſs any ſentiments, thoſe of joy on his return, if he had felt it, were as eaſily expreſſed, and as natural as any other: that he had not determined when he came, to make ſo ſhort a viſit, ſhe was convinced from his ſending away his carriage; and ſhe began to queſtion herſelf whether it might not be ſomething in her reception of him that had diſguſted him; but after much thinking on the ſubject

ject ſhe returned to her firſt reſolution to ſuſpend her judgment: ſhe was not deſirous to conceal from Adelaide how much ſhe was intereſted and agitated: her friend ſympathized with her, and approved her determination to releaſe Lord Reycolm from his promiſe, if on another interview ſhe had reaſon to ſuſpect an alienation of his affections.

Mrs. Stavenell had a large card-party in the evening, at which Conſtance was obliged to be preſent: that ſhe was not in ſpirits was immediately diſcovered, but as neither Lord Farnford nor his ſiſters were there, ſhe eſcaped with a ſmall portion of raillery. The company ſtaid late, and ſhe retired to her chamber mentally and corporally fatigued; yet ſhe did not cloſe her eyes during the whole of the night: what had paſſed in the day ſo fully engroſſed her thoughts that all inclination to ſleep was totally baniſhed: ſhe foreſaw much uneaſineſs in ſtore for her, for though ſhe would draw no concluſion from Lord Reycolm's behaviour, ſhe had but too much cauſe to imagine that had he been left to follow his own inclination, he would have forborne his viſit, that in ſo long an abſence his attachment to her had relaxed, was not ſhe thought criminal; but what was to become of her if her father ſhould oblige him to the performance of his engagement? ſhe knew that Sir Edward was very anxious for the match, he had frequently ſaid, the whole happineſs of his life and of her's depended on it, and ſhe feared a diſappointment

ment would be an insupportable affliction to him. After having ruminated some time on this, she blamed herself for so precipitately supposing a wish to be exonerated from his promise was the reason of Lord Reycolm's coolness; it might be accidental, it might be unintentional; perhaps his sudden return might have overpowered his faculties, or some unfortunate accident might have dejected him: all these allowances and suppositions she candidly made for him, but with a strengthening resolution never to be his wife if she had just cause to believe he wished his engagement annulled.

CHAP. XIV.

INDIFFERENCE.

AS soon as Constance rose in the morning Adelaide came to her.—I am sure, said she, you have enjoyed your own thoughts long enough; it is not right to sit alone when we are low spirited; you know you tell me so—come, let me return some part of your kindness, and endeavour to raise your spirits.—I am not in low spirits, answered Constance: I believe I should find, were I to make an impartial inquiry, that it is my pride that is wounded. I foolishly imagined that seeing me would

would have a wonderful effect on Lord Reycolm: and my vanity is no more than properly mortified. If I could be ſo ſilly as to ſuppoſe that in ſo long an abſence, employed in travelling, to ſee whatever was moſt worthy obſervation, he could meet nothing that would more engage his attention than myſelf, I deſerve whatever I ſuffer: but who can ſay what the cauſe of his dejection is? he may perhaps, in quiting the continent, have parted from ſome valued friend, ſome cloſe connection may have been broken, and it is impoſſible while ſuch a wound remains unhealed, either to receive or expreſs pleaſure.—It may be ſo, ſaid Adelaide, and you are very good to ſuppoſe it may: if friendſhip is the tie broken he will ſoon recover it by ſeeing you; and even if it is ſome cloſer attachment, his ſtrayed heart may return to you.—Indeed, replied Conſtance, if I diſcover that any ſuch attachment is the cauſe of it, his ſtrayed heart never ſhall return to me; not that I ſhould be gratified by reſenting his little command over himſelf, but becauſe I would not for the world be the occaſion of his unhappineſs; and who knows but he may have ſacrificed a much more ardent paſſion than he ever felt or profeſſed for me, to his ſenſe of honor and obligation?—who knows but at this moment ſome deſerving woman may be lamenting his prior engagement, and in the agony of diſappointed affection, wiſhing I had never exiſted?—It is poſſible that Lord Reycolm himſelf may

may be a fitter object of pity than resentment, and I assure you I am sincere when I say that, supposing this the case, I should have inexpressible pleasure in making such a renunciation as would leave him at liberty: the worst I fear is, by avowing this disposition to encourage Lord Farnford, and that Lord Reycolm's departure from his intentions should offend my father.

Her appearance sufficiently declared how ill she had rested; Mrs. Stavenell, when they met at breakfast, noticed it, and attributing it to it's true cause, encouraged her resentment. Lord Calorne called in at noon, and Constance sat in fear lest Lord Reycolm's conduct should he submitted to his judgment; but her aunt had enlarged her stock of prudence on the occasion, saying nothing more than that he was come. As soon as he was gone she went out, and returned no more till dinner time: a commission af compliments from Lord Farnford's family informed Constance to what quarter her visit had been, and she did not doubt that the subject uppermost in her mind had been fully discussed: this did not please her, as she feared it might give Lord Farnford new hopes, and take off from the restraint with which he had lately behaved to her.

In the evening Mrs. Stavenell was engaged from home; and her son, her niece, and Adelaide, remained together: their conversation turned on that subject which had for the last twenty-four hours

hours occupied their attention, but Conſtance, deſiring, leſt ſhe ſhould paſs ſuch a night as the laſt, that ſome other topic might be introduced, Lord Reycolm was no more mentioned. About nine o'clock Mr. Stavenell was going out, when a meſſage came from Lord Reycolm to Mrs. Stavenell and Miſs Fitzarthur, ſignifying that he would dine with them the next day: what anſwer it were beſt to return, Conſtance could not at the moment determine: ſhe applied to Mr. Stavenell, who willing to aſſiſt her, ſent the ſervant out of the room, and aſked her what ſhe would ſay.—I do not know, ſhe replied; I cannot decline it, becauſe we have no dinner engagement, and yet I will not ſay, *I* ſhall be glad to ſee him.—Give me a card, ſaid Mr. Stavenell, I will contrive for you. He then wrote:

'Mrs. Stavenell being from home, Mr. Stave-
'nell takes upon him to anſwer for her and Miſs
'Fitzarthur, that they will expect the honor of
'Lord Reycolm's company to dinner to-morrow.'

Thus was Conſtance effectually and adroitly extricated from her difficulty, and ſhe hoped this promiſed interview would enable her to form a deciſive opinion; yet ſhe could not forbear obſerving the inconſiſtency of Lord Reycolm's words and actions: when he went away the day before, he had ſaid he ſhould go the next day to his father's, and he not only was ſtill in town, but had engaged himſelf to be ſo on the day following.

In

In the morning ſhe called on Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton: ſhe found the former alone, and that ſhe had heard of Lord Reycolm's arrival: her inclination was ſtrong to communicate to her what was paſſed, and what ſuſpicions it had excited in her mind, as what Lady Maria thought of it would in a great meaſure have guided her own opinion; but conſidering that this might prejudice her, perhaps unjuſtly, againſt Lord Reycolm, ſhe forbore mentioning it. Soon after, Lord Farnford and Lady Emma came in.—So, ſaid his lordſhip, I give you joy, Miſs Fitzarthur; I hear Lord Reycolm is come at laſt—pray what apology does he make?—One that is too good, anſwered Conſtance, he has been thrown from his horſe, and has been very ill in conſequence of it.—And what does he ſay, for being ſo long in town without paying his devoirs to you, he aſked.—I do not find, ſaid Conſtance, that he was in town: he had landed but the night before we ſaw him.—Oh, there you are deceived, replied Lord Farnford, I will ſwear he was in town when I told you ſo; not that I ſaw him, but I had it from one who ſpoke to him.—There is ſome miſtake in it, ſhe anſwered, I know not how to account for it; perhaps I may learn to day, for Lord Reycolm dines with us. You are very incredulous, ſaid Lord Farnford: How happy it is for us when others are prepoſſeſſed in our favor! Lord Reycolm is a happy man; I dare ſay his joy at ſeeing you was exceſſive: after

ſo long an abſence, ſo many thouſand fears as he muſt have had while at a diſtance from you, to meet you was a greater than mortal felicity—and to meet you ſo diſpoſed towards him—no illiberal prejudices to combat—no ſlights' no contempt, no neglect! It was more happineſs than he deſerved, who could ſo philoſophically wait it's completion, as to be in another kingdom three years.

I dare ſay, ſaid Lady Emma, by her opportune interpoſition, very much relieving Conſtance, Lord Reycolm was overjoyed to a degree: could he ſpeak when he ſaw you?—He appeared to be very ill, replied Conſtance.—Ill? interrupted Lord Farnford—Good God! could any man in ſuch a ſituation think of illneſs: he muſt have no ſoul who could remember even the acuteſt pain at ſuch a time.—Your lordſhip, Miſs Fitzarthur anſwered, is rather too ſublime in your notions; certainly pain will at all times be attended to; and I cannot think the ſight of me could be a ſubject of ſuch joy as to exclude its remembrance.—My brother ſaid Lady Maria always talks in the ſuperlative: he thinks thoſe who can bear joy and retain their ſenſes hardly worthy of it.

The arrival of viſitors gave Conſtance an opportunity of taking her leave, not being able to determine whether Lord Farnford and his ſiſters did or did not know the circumſtances of Lord Reycolm's viſit. On returning home ſhe found Mr. Stavenell alone in the parlour, and he detained her a few minutes

minutes to tell her that, as his mother would be out in the evening, he hoped nothing would prevent Lord Reycolm giving her a ſatisfactory reaſon for the aukwardneſs of his behaviour: Conſtance knew to whom ſhe was obliged for this attention, as her aunt had intended ſpending the evening at home, and aſked Mr. Stavenell if *he* ſhould be out.—I will do, ſaid he, what is moſt agreeable to you. Then, replied Conſtance, if you could conveniently be preſent, I ſhould be obliged to you.—He promiſed to do ſo, and ſhe, quitting him, went to Adelaide.

She had ſcarely ſat down when Mr. Stavenell came into the room, and calling her into that adjoining, he ſaid:—I am ſorry to be the bearer of unwelcome news; but ſome one muſt tell you.—Reycolm has juſt ſent a verbal apology for not dining here, he ſays he is indiſpoſed, but he will to-morrow take the chance of finding you at home in the evening.—Mercy on me! anſwered Conſtance, does he mean to affront Mrs. Stavenell? this is really unpardonable.—It is unaccountable, ſaid Mr. Stavenell: I begin to fear he has not the perfect uſe of his intellects.—What anſwer did you ſend, ſaid ſhe.—None, he replied, the ſervant did not ſtay for any.—Surely, returned Conſtance, he was very indifferent how his meſſage was received; but if he comes to-morrow I will not ſee him.—I think you are right ſaid Mr. Stavenell, your reſentment is not only juſtifiable but neceſſary; if he

is offended at your not ſeeing him he will not call again; and, if he really wiſhes to ſee you, he will be very anxious to clear himſelf of the ſuſpicion of neglect.—And now, ſaid ſhe, will you tell me what I had beſt do? Shall I write to my father and inform him of Lord Reycolm's ſtrange coldneſs, or ſhall I wait and ſee farther? I wrote to my mother and told her he was come and appeared in ill health.—I would ſtay, Mr. Stavenell anſwered, till I had learn't a little more; perhaps when he finds you will not ſee him, he may aſſign ſome cauſe as an excuſe for his neglect. This adviſe ſhe approved, and promiſed to follow: and then as Mrs. Stavenell was from home, went to communicate this new diſappointment to Mademoiſelle Rouſſon.

It was evident that Lord Reycolm's behaviour, however Mrs. Stavenell exclaimed againſt it, was not a ſubject of *vexation* to her: when her niece told her of the meſſage ſhe had ſent, it could not be doubted that ſhe hoped all he loſt of her favour, Lord Farnford would gain: Conſtance was therefore obliged to conceal her reſentment, and to make for him apologies which ſhe believed foundationleſs.—Aye, ſee there, ſaid her aunt, they ſay it's better for ſome folks to ſteal a horſe than for ſome others to look over a hedge; if Lord Farnford had done half as much, you'd have been in a mighty paſſion; but Lord Reycolm's a favourite, you'll

you'll bear any thing from him; and upon my life I believe he'll try your patience if he has you.

Juſt after breakfaſt the next morning Lord Reycolm called. Conſtance's ſurpriſe was ſo great, not expecting him till the evening, that when he was announced ſhe remained ſilent.—Oh pray, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, let him be ſhewn into the parlour: and now my dear you'll go and hear what fine ſpeeches he can make.—You will come with me, madam, will you not? ſaid Conſtance.—Not I indeed, replied ſhe, Mademoiſelle and I'll ſtay here.—Pray do not make me go by myſelf, ſaid her niece, how odd it will appear.—Not at all, Mrs. Stavenell anſwered, you'll not want company.—To this irkſome neceſſity Conſtance was forced to ſubmit, Mr. Stavenell was out, and Adelaide had uniformly declined ſeeing every body: ſhe therefore went down with an apology for Mrs. Stavenell's not appearing.—My viſit is to Miſs Fitzarthur, Lord Reycolm replied, I come to beg her pardon for my yeſterday's fault; had I known ſooner that my buſineſs would have called me into the city at the time when I ſhould have been here, I would have ſent earlier.—Conſtance ſaid nothing: the excuſe ſent was indiſpoſition, now it was buſineſs in the city: Lord Reycolm was completely inconſiſtent.

They ſat down, a pauſe enſued; it was an awkward ſilence, but Conſtance was determined not to interrupt it: in a few minutes he aſked her

when ſhe heard from Marſtonbury.—ſhe anſwered, the week before laſt.—Sir Edward and Lady Barbara are well, I hope, ſaid his lordſhip.—They are very well, ſhe replied.—Do they know I am come? ſaid he: I wrote to my father, perhaps they may have heard that way.—In my laſt letter, Conſtance anſwered, I told my mother of your lordſhip's arrival, and, added ſhe, provoked at his inſipidity, in my next I ſhall tell her that, for what cauſe I know not, you ſeem ſorry you are returned.—Why ſhould you think ſo? you do me injuſtice indeed, Miſs Fitzarthur, replied Lord Reycolm, coldly.—Becauſe, ſaid ſhe, I have every reaſon to believe it.—You are miſtaken, he anſwered; I rejoice in my return, and do moſt ardently wiſh I had never quitted England: you are offended at my remiſſneſs; I own I have not done as I ought; you muſt forgive it; I have not the uſe of my ſenſes.—I am not offended, ſaid Conſtance, but I am certain that your return affords you no pleaſure.—Nothing can, he replied; if I could be pleaſed, it would be with ſeeing you: how long do you ſtay in town?—It is uncertain, ſhe anſwered: I came to ſpend the winter with my aunt; but, ſaid ſhe, not to depart from our ſubject, tell me, my lord, whether meeting me does not make you uneaſy, and whether you do not wiſh all engagements between us cancelled; if you do, it is cruelty not to own it: conſider, it is deceiving me, and why ſhould you? I could not for the world

word make you or any body unhappy.—Do not talk ſo, he replied, you are too good, my intentions are the ſame as when I quitted you at Marſton-bury, and I hope in a little time to convince you—but ſaid he, heſitating, I have a weight on my ſpirits, and have had ever ſince my fall: I ſhall now, I hope, recover it, and ſhall then appear what I ought to be. I fear I detain you from Mrs. Stavenell, I will take another opportunity of calling; I muſt go down to my father's for about ten days, and as ſoon as I return, it ſhall be my firſt buſineſs to ſee you. With theſe words he roſe, bowed, and retired, leaving Conſtance more embarraſſed than before. What he meant by wiſhing he had never left England, ſhe could not divine; but ſhe really believed his fall had hurt his intellects, and of this he himſelf ſeemed ſenſible: ſhe now pitied him, and returning to Mrs. Stavenell, told her how far his inconſiſtencies were reſolvable into the conſequencies of this accident: ſhe heard her, commended her charity, but concluded with ſaying, ſhe did not believe a word on't.

CHAP. XV.

OBSTINACY.

THE gloom which theſe untoward circumſtances had diffuſed over the mind of Miſs Fitzarthur, and by conſequence over that of her ſympathetic friend, was in ſome meaſure diſpelled by an event as unexpected and more pleaſing. As Mrs. Stavenell, her ſon, her niece, and Adelaide were ſitting down to dinner, a letter was brought to Mr. Stavenell: he opened it, and found another encloſed, and opening that, a third: he roſe from table, and retiring to the farther end of the room, read two of them, and put them altogether into his pocket, ſaying nothing: his mother's curioſity was awakened, ſhe aſked whom they came from, and he anſwered her by ſaying, ſhe ſhould know after dinner. As ſoon as the ſervants were diſmiſſed, he aſked Adelaide if ſhe had any relations in Bourdeaux.—Yes, ſaid ſhe, my father had a couſin there: why do you aſk? is that letter about me? —Is he a Proteſtant? returned Mr. Stavenell.—O yes, Adelaide replied, he is my own father's relation, but there never was much intercourſe between our families.—Well then, ſaid Mr. Stavenell, this letter is from that gentleman: he has heard that you have left France, and that I have written

written to your mother, and he desires me to forward the enclosed to you: the packet was directed to the inn at Dover, and Mrs. Belchier has sent it to me. He then gave the letters to her, she read them, tears of joy starting in her eyes, and gave them to Constance, while Mr. Stavenell communicated the contents verbally to his mother. That from her relation to Mr. Stavenell, contained expressions of gratitude to him for the protection he had afforded to Mademoiselle Rousson, of strong interest for her, and a wish that she would, either by returning to some of her friends, or by empowering them to act for her, prevent the injury which her fortune would sustain by her absence.—That to Adelaide was dictated by the most cordial friendship; he urged her to come to him, pledging his honour that no harm should ensue to her, approving what she had done, and promising her an asylum in his house, as long as she should chuse to continue there.

A shower of tears relieved the agitation of her mind, she was ready to accede to the proposition of returning to her relations, and was highly sensible of this unexpected instance of friendship. She wrote the same evening to Bourdeaux, professing her willingness to accept the invitation, and would have named the earliest possible time for setting out, if Mr. Stavenell had not prevented her by insisting on her staying in England long enough to see a little of the metropolis: hitherto

ſaid he, you have been immured. As concealment will be no longer neceſſary, I beg you will not engage to go in leſs than a fortnight, and on that condition I will myſelf accompany you in your journey.

To this requeſt, in which Mrs. Stavenell and her niece joined, Adelaide not reluctantly yielded; and ſhe was now to begin a new kind of life. The prohibition to mention her was taken off the ſervants; and Conſtance, whoſe regret at the idea of parting from her friend was overbalanced by the proſpect of her reſtoration to ſome degree of peace, promiſed herſelf the next day the pleaſure of introducing her to Lady Maria Peryton, who ſhe knew would be glad to be acquainted with her. That ſhe might not embarraſs or diſtreſs her by relating the circumſtances of her ſtory when ſhe was preſent, ſhe went the next morning alone to Lord Farnford's, for the purpoſe of ſeeing Lady Maria, and inviting her to meet Adelaide in the evening. She found Lord Farnford, his ſiſters, and Lord Calorne at breakfaſt: expreſſions of welcome, inquiries, and reproaches for never coming, being over, ſhe aſked Lady Maria if ſhe and Lady Emma would drink tea at Mrs. Stavenell's—We were juſt going to ſend, ſaid Lady Maria,; my brother propoſed it, and Lord Calorne has promiſed to meet us. This point ſettled, Conſtance told them whom ſhe wiſhed to introduce, and as much of Adelaid's ſtory as ſhe thought it neceſſary

neceſſary they ſhould know, reſerving particulars for a tête à tête with Lady Maria.

In the evening the party met, and Mademoiſelle Rouſſon made her appearance: that ſhe caught Lord Farnford's notice was, immediately on his ſeeing her, perceptible: Lady Maria received her with complacent benevolence; Lady Emma with ſprightly joy; and Lord Calorne with polite attention. Conſtance was now in her own opinion at the ſummit of felicity; the preſent pleaſure excluded every anxious remembrance, ſhe ſaw all around her happy, and her drooping friend's ſpirits raiſed to chearfulneſs.

It was propoſed that during the remainder of Adelaide's ſtay in London, ſhe ſhould be occaſionally at the public amuſements; a party for the play the next evening was therefore agreed on: Mrs. and Mr. Stavenell were otherwiſe engaged, but wiſhing this might not influence the reſt, he aſked Lord Calorne to go in his place.—I am very ſorry I cannot, ſaid Lord Calorne, I am obliged to dine at my father's; it will be late before I get away, but I ſhall drop in before the entertainment is over, to convey ſome ladies out of the houſe. It was then ſettled that Lord Farnford's family ſhould, in their way, call at Mrs. Stavenell's and take Conſtance and Mademoiſelle Rouſſon.

The next morning Adelaide went out with Mrs. Stavenell and her niece, for the firſt time ſince ſhe

had entered the houſe: they returned home juſt time enough to dreſs, and at the appointed hour Lady Maria and Lady Emma came, without their brother: on inquiry it appeared that he had dined at the Thatched houſe, and that his ſiſters had called for him, but could not diſengage him from his company. Conſtance did not like going without a gentleman; but Lady Emma's aſſurances that, as their ſervant was at the houſe, there was nothing in it, reconciled her to the neceſſity, and, as Lord Farnford promiſed to be with them by eight o'clock, ſhe had no fears about coming away. They went, got in very well, and were much pleaſe with their amuſement; but eight o'clock arriving without Lord Farnford, Conſtance began to grow a little uneaſy, for the houſe was uncommonly crouded: about nine his lordſhip entered the box, ſo intoxicated that ſhe would gladly have diſpenſed with the performance of his promiſe, and run all riſque of getting away without him: ſhe however ſaid not a word; Lady Maria ſhook her head, and ſaid—I was afraid it would be ſo.—Lady Emma laughed, and Adelaide's attention was wholly engroſſed by the alteration of Miſs Fitzarthur's countenance, next to whom Lord Farnford ſeated himſelf. To attend to the performance was now impoſſible; he was ſo vociferous nothing but his voice could be heard, and he ſeemed ſcarely aware that he had quitted his noiſy companions; this might have been borne, had his behaviour

haviour to Conſtance been confined within the bounds of propriety; but his exceſs inclined him to be equally quarrelſome and amorous; a requeſt to him to be leſs loud was reſented, and a patient toleration of his impertinence proved an encouragement to his gallantry. Lady Maria ſeeing how diſagreeable her brother's vicinity to Miſs Fitzarthur was to her, offered to change places with her, this he oppoſed with all poſſible vehemence, ſhe was therefore obliged to remain in her uncomfortable ſituation, conſcious that the eyes of every one on the other ſide of the houſe was directed to her, whom Lord Farnford's ridiculous behaviour had made conſpicuous; when ſhe heard a gentleman, who had a few minutes before gone out, and now returned into the next box, ſay to ſome ladies there—'Tis very true, therefore I would adviſe you to go as ſoon as the play is over.—I think, anſwered one of the ladies, we had better go now; for all who do not chuſe to ſit it will be going out as faſt as poſſible after the play, and perhaps we may not be able to get to the carriage.—On this they roſe to go, when Lady Maria, who ſat next them, alarmed at what ſhe had heard, deſired to know what they apprehended.—A riot, madam, the gentleman replied: a violent oppoſition to the farce is expected. Conſtance's terror at this information was exceſſive: Lady Maria endeavoured to make Lord Farnford ſenſible of their danger, but in-

effectually; he ſaid he was juſt in a humour for a riot, and would not ſtir.

The gentleman to whom Lady Maria had ſpoken, now ſeeing how unable Lord Farnford was to protect his company, offered to attend them to their carriage; but Lady Maria had unfortunately ſent it away, and it was not ordered till eleven: ſhe, however, recollected, that ſo utterly incapable as her brother was of any degree of care, the chances were in favour of his having neglected to diſmiſs his chariot, ſhe therefore begged the gentleman to order Lord Farnford's ſervants to be called, and ſent to them: he promiſed to obey her directions and went away. Lady Emma, who was the only one of the ladies not terrified, aſſured them there was nothing they need fear; for the riot would very probably be confined to the galleries, and, if they would ſit ſtill, nothing but the noiſe would diſturb them; but this could not ſatisfy her leſs heroic companions. Lord Farnford now jumped up, and ſaid he would go into the pit, for if he ſtaid there he ſhould ſee nothing. Conſtance was half dead with terror; Adelaide's fears were not ſo great, becauſe ſhe was not perfectly aware of the danger; ſhe was encouraged by Lady Emma's confidence, and all her concern was for Miſs Fitzarthur: Lady Maria, though very much frightened, exerted all her preſence of mind to ſupply her brother's inability; ſhe ſo far prevailed with him

him that he ſat down, and all they could hope from him was his remaining paſſive.

The laſt act of the play was now very nearly concluded, the ſervants did not come, and many people were going out, when Lady Maria ſaw Lord Calorne enter the oppoſite box haſtily, ſhe would have given any thing for a poſſibility of informing him of their ſituation, but ſhe could not catch his eye, and the noiſe was already too great to make him hear her: he did not ſtay two minutes, but went out with his party.

The curtain dropped, and the uproar grew dreadful, but neither the terror of Conſtance, nor the entreaties of Lady Maria could move Lord Farnford: their fears were at the higheſt when the box door opened, and Lord Calorne came in; the ladies he had been with having ſeen the diſtreſs of Lady Maria, and Lord Farnford's utter inability to protect them.—How can you be ſo mad, Lord Farnford, ſaid he, as to ſtay here?—they ſay the houſe will be pulled to pieces—do quit it while you can, for the croud increaſes very faſt.—Let it, replied his philoſophical lordſhip, I ſhall not ſtir: what is there for me to be afraid of? I ſhall ſtay and ſee it out—If you are ſo obſtinate, ſaid Lord Calorne, you muſt abide the conſequences; but theſe ladies ſhall go with me.—No, they ſhall ſtay here, Lord Farnford anſwered.—You cannot be ſo abſurd, ſaid Lord Calorne, as to riſque ſtaying here during the riot; if they are not expoſed to perſonal danger, they will be to inſult.—I do

not care, was all the anſwer Lord Farnford would give.

The clamor by this time became outrageous; the lights were thrown down, and all was tumult, noiſe, and confuſion: every body had quitted the boxes; and Lord Calorne warmly inſiſted on conducting Lord Farnford's party through the croud; but in proportion as one was urgent the other was obſtinate, and Lord Calorne, endeavouring to get between Lord Farnford and the the ladies that he might not prevent their going, this valiant diſciple of Bacchus laid his hand on his ſword, ſwore he would not be inſulted by any man living, and ſtammered out that he would have ſatisfaction.—What you pleaſe when you are ſober, replied Lord Calorne; but I am not quite ſo mad as to endanger the ſafety of thoſe you ought to protect for the pleaſure of bringing you to your ſenſes.—He then, laying hold with one hand of the hilt of Lord Farnford's ſword, to prevent his drawing it, gave the other to Lady Maria, but ſhe, kindly apprehenſive for Conſtance, begged him to take her firſt, and then Adelaide; he did ſo, and they got on the outſide of the box door: he returned for Lady Maria and Lady Emma, but their brother, provoked at his firmneſs, had reeled to the door to ſtop them, and there, being too drunk to ſtand without ſupport, he fell down, making thoſe within priſoners. Lord Calorne immediately jumped over into the next box, and found Conſtance

ſtance and Mademoiſelle Rouſſon in the lobby, environed with the crowd: their ſituation was now more dangerous than before, therefore, telling Lady Maria he would return in a few minutes, he forced a paſſage through the mob, and having put them into his carriage he detained one of the footmen, whom he ordered to get two chairs immediately, and then returned to the relief of Lord Farnford's ſiſters. Miſs Fitzarthur and Mademoiſelle Rouſſon were now perfectly ſafe, they ſoon got away from the mob, and reached home without any additional misfortune.

The carriage was to go back for Lord Calorne, and with it Mrs. Stavenell ſent a ſervant to learn the fate of Lady Maria and her ſiſter: their apprehenſions were ſoon relieved by hearing that the rioters, after deſtroying the ornaments of the houſe, on an apology from the ſtage, had deſiſted from farther violence, and that Lord Farnford and the ladies had quitted the houſe.

CHAP. XVI.

JUSTIFICATION.

EARLY next morning Mrs. Stavenell diſpatched a meſſenger to inquire after the family in Portman-ſquare, before whoſe return Lord Ca-

lorne came to make ſimilar inquiries reſpecting Miſs Fitzarthur and her friend?—How did Lord Farnford's ſiſters get home? was Conſtance's firſt queſtion.—I am juſt come from their houſe, he replied, but neither of them were ſtirring: I learnt however that they got home very well: fortunately when their carriage went for them their ſervants made their way in, or elſe they muſt have remained where they were, for Lord Farnford lay where we left him till he was carried off.—But did you not find them when you returned? ſaid Conſtance.—No, ſaid he, it was impoſſible to get near them: I was forced to go round and acroſs the ſtage, and by that time they were gone.

Mrs. Stavenell by leaving the room gave her niece an opportunity ſhe much wiſhed for, of aſking Lord Calorne if he had ſeen Lord Reycolm, as by that ſhe hoped to find out whether he had obſerved any alteration in him.—I have ſeen him but once, he replied, and that was accidental: we met in the ſtreet, and to my very great aſtoniſhment he ſeemed ſcarcely to know me.—He appears to me, ſaid Conſtance, to be in a very ill ſtate of health: he looks ſadly; I never ſaw ſuch a change.—I believe, his lordſhip anſwered, that it is an obſervation all of his acquaintance, who have ſeen him ſince his return, have made. I own I was very much concerned, when, meeting him in the ſtreet, and ſtopping him, for he would have paſſed me without ſeeing me, he returned all my expreſſions of

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joy and congratulation with ſuch coldneſs and indifference as would almoſt have inclined me to believe I had by miſtake addreſſed a ſtranger.—Conſtance did not dare to be equally explicit: ſomething within reſtrained her; and ſhe only repeated that he appeared to be very ill.

Juſt as Lord Calorne, after an hour and a half's goſſip, was going, Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton were announced: he ſtaid to ſee them, and to know what paſſed after he left them. Lady Maria, as ſhe entered the room, ſeeing him near the door, ſaid.—I ought always to rejoice in meeting your lordſhip, for I do not know what I ſhould have done without the ſeaſonable relief you afforded us laſt night: I am ſure my brother muſt make an apology for the trouble we gave you.—His apology replied Lord Calorne, laughing, muſt be a challenge, you know he threatened me fiercely laſt night.—Yes, ſaid Lady Maria, he ſpoke brave words, but I aſſure you he is very penitent this morning: I ſaw him juſt before we came out, and he is extremely angry at himſelf; and very ſenſible of your kindneſs: he talked of calling on you to-day to make his acknowledgments.

On the countenance of Lady Emma diſpleaſure was ſtrongly imprinted, though when ſhe approach-Conſtance, ſhe endeavoured to diſguiſe it with a ſmile: ſhe paſſed Lord Calorne in ſilence, and without looking at him, and then tittuping to Miſs Fitzarthur

Fitzarthur, in a tone of affected gaiety :—Well my dear, ſaid ſhe, how did you get home laſt night? Lord Calorne was ſo good as to ſee you ſafe home I hope: I am very glad you did not ſtay with us, for you'd have been monſtrouſly frightened; frightened to a degree.—Conſtance thanked her for her concern, and was going to anſwer her queſtion, when her ladyſhip turning away to Adelaide ſaid—I hope Mademoiſelle Rouſſon was not frightened: I aſſure you ma'am, after you left us it was dreadful—ſuch ſcreaming, and ſhrieking, and ſuch a piece of work! I really began to think I muſt go into hyſterics. Lady Emma's animated deſcription of her terror might have proceeded, had ſhe not overheard Lord Calorne apologiſing to her ſiſter for not having performed his promiſe of returning to her: with a ſtudied air of ſtiff reſerve ſhe looked at him, and ſaid—Your lordſhip need not trouble yourſelf to make excuſes, we know why you didn't return: it was much better you ſhould go home with Miſs Fitzarthur than come back for us: you gueſſed our carriage was ordered about eleven, and if the ſervants did not find us in one part of the houſe they might in another; it was their fault if they didn't.

What you have ſaid, madam, Lord Calorne anſwered, convinces me of the neceſſity of my excuſing to Lady Maria the breach of my promiſe. I did not come home with Miſs Fitzarthur, nor did I at all rely on your ſervants' finding you.

I put Miſs Fitzarthur and Mademoiſelle Rouſſon into the carriage, and endeavoured to make my way back, but it was impoſſible; the croud was coming towards me, and I ſaw to wait their being cleared would occaſion ſuch a delay as would render any attempt for you uſeleſs: finding, therefore, that to regain any of the ſitting part of the houſe would be impracticable, I went round to one of the back doors, and with difficulty prevailed to be permitted to croſs the ſtage, hoping I might be able to get from thence to your box; but, as near an hour had been ſpent in theſe endeavours, you were gone, and I heard had got very well to your coach.—It is mighty well, Lady Emma replied; we did get away, and that was all we wanted; I only wiſhed that we might all have gone together, as we might have done very eaſily.—Indeed you are miſtaken, ſiſter, ſaid Lady Maria, vexed at Lady Emma's groundleſs reſentment:—what was to become of Miſs Fitzarthur and Mademoiſelle Rouſſon while Lord Calorne had got us out of the box?—You know my brother would not let us go, and to have clambered, as we muſt have done, would have taken ſo much time as might have ſeparated us from Miſs Fitzarthur, without our being able afterwards to find her; for the lobby was quite full, and all the people driving one way:—do not be angry about it: rather rejoice that we met with no accident.—I am not angry, replied Lady Emma; the tears ſtarting in her eyes.

Happily

Happily at this moment Mrs. Stavenell, who had been detained below, entered the room.—Hey-day! my dear Lady Emma, ſhe exclaimed, what's the matter ?---why you're ready to cry !--Nothing's the matter, ſaid her ladyſhip, riſing and going to the window.—I believe, ſaid Lord Calorne, I have the honour to occaſion Lady Emma's tears—it is pity, excited by my abſurdity laſt night, that concerns her, —ſhe is ſorry to ſee I could ſo far forget myſelf as to prefer ſecuring the lives of two ladies to riſking thoſe of four.—I don't underſtand it, Mrs. Stavenell replied.—She is vexed, ſaid Lady Maria, that Lord Calorne did not come back to us laſt night, and ſhe does not chuſe to admit as an excuſe the impoſſibility of his doing it.—Well but my dear Lady Emma, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, I am ſure you cannot be angry with Lord Calorne, he's too great a favourite :—you muſt forgive and forget, beſide I hear you waſn't a bit frightened.—Not frightened ? returned Lady Emma, I'm ſure I was as pale as a ghoſt, and I ſhook every joint of me.

No one contradicted her ladyſhip : that her paleneſs was not obſerveable was to be accounted for, and her fortitude ſo far prevailed as to conceal her trembling. Conſtance bluſhed for her : that Lord Calorne ſaw and deſpiſed her fondneſs was not to be doubted, and ſhe rejoiced heartily at his ſpirit which would not buy her favour by aſking her pardon ; he juſtified what he had done on the plea of neceſſity, but Lady Emma thought herſelf ſlighted,

and

and would not be convinced: Lady Maria was diſtreſſed at her folly; Mrs. Stavenell tried to ſoothe her. Having exculpated himſelf from every ſuſpicion of neglect, which a reaſonable mind could entertain, and proved to the ſatisfaction of all who would be ſatisfied, that ſhe who complained was one of thoſe whom he meant and had done all in his power to aſſiſt, Lord Calorne took his leave, and then the ſubject was renewed by Mrs. Stavenell, who ſeemed highly diverted with Lord Farnford's exploit.—I ſhall roaſt him for it, ſaid ſhe, when I catch him:—he ſhall ſquire ladies again truly!—I ſhall beſeech him next time to take care and be ſober.—I am very happy, ſaid Lady Maria, that we eſcaped ſo well:—had Lord Calorne done as Emma would have had him, I do not know how we ſhould have got away:—it was impoſſible for one gentleman to take care of four of us, and I really thought Miſs Fitzarthur would have fainted:—it was the moſt eſſential ſervice that could be rendered us to take charge of her; for ſuppoſing ſhe had fainted in the lobby, ſhe would in all probability have been ſuffocated or trampled to death.

Conſtance wiſhing this ſubject forgotten, and Lady Emma reſtored to her good humour, changed the diſcourſe, and nothing more was ſaid on the ſubject while their viſitors ſtayed. Before they went, Lady Maria engaged Mrs. Stavenell's family to dine with them the next day, when Mademoiſelle Rouſſon

ſon was to make her firſt appearance at Lord Farnford's.

CHAP. XVII.

SURPRISE.

A Suſpicion, by no means painful, had for ſome days exiſted in the mind of Conſtance that Mr. Stavenell's commiſeration for Mademoiſelle Rouſſon, and her gratitude to him, had produced an attachment of a different kind: at firſt ſhe inclined to think herſelf miſtaken, believing that ſo much as Adelaide had already confided in her, ſhe would not in this inſtance have kept her ignorant; but every circumſtance ſtrengthening the former opinion, and Adelaide ſtill continuing ſilent on the ſubject, ſhe found that her conjecture might be right, and yet want the proof ſhe expected. Mr. Stavenell's behaviour, though it was far from indifferent, did not afford ſuch ground for the ſuppoſition as Adelaide's did: ſhe appeared, when alone with Miſs Fitzarthur, to be in fear of diſcovering in her converſation ſomething which was to be concealed: her anſwers were often ſtudied and cautious,

tious, in expreſſions of obligation to Mr. Stavenell, a theme on which ſhe had hitherto been laviſh, ſhe was now reſtrained and brief; and whenever Conſtance mentioned him, which ſhe ſometimes did to give her an opportunity of diſcloſing what ſhe thought it inconſiſtent with the true ſpirit of friendſhip to conceal, Mademoiſelle Rouſſon's countenance proclaimed uneaſineſs, and ſhe either interrupted her by ſuddenly introducing ſome foreign topic, or by making ſome excuſe to get out of the room. As ſuch an union had nothing in itſelf diſhonourable, and would have given not only Conſtance but Mrs. Stavenell pleaſure, ſhe was ſurpriſed and hurt at the ſecrecy obſerved; ſhe however would not gratify her curioſity by inquiries which, though intimacy might warrant, were liable, if diſliked, to be condemned as impertinent: ſhe hoped ſhe was not excluded from Adelaide's confidence becauſe ſhe was thought unworthy of it, and candidly concluded that the fear of being charged with too ſudden a verſatility, in having ſo ſoon accepted conſolation for the loſs of her former lover, was the cauſe to which her friend's ſilence was to be aſcribed.

In the life which Adelaide at this time led, and which Mr. Stavenell by every poſſible method ſtrove to render pleaſing to her, all remembrance of what was paſſed ſeemed to be obliterated; her ſpirits were reſtored not only to calmneſs, but to hilarity, and from her apparent enjoyment of her preſent

preſent ſituation, it was not unfair or abſurd to ſuppoſe that any thing which had detained her in England would not have been deemed a misfortune; ſhe however did not appear to regret the neceſſity of her quitting it, nor could ſhe, if Miſs Fitzarthur's conjecture was right, becauſe Mr. Stavenell had promiſed to go with her.

The time named for her departure now drew very near, and the idea of parting with Conſtance dejected her: her ſpirits drooped in proportion as the day approached, nor was the concern of her friend, leſs: Conſtance's loſs was certainly the greater, as ſhe muſt be totally deprived of all the advantage ſhe had derived from her ſociety, without any compenſation: in Adelaide ſhe had found a friend to whom ſhe could and did communicate every circumſtance of her ſituation; ever ready to hear her complaints, to rejoice in her pleaſures, and alleviate her mortifications; when ſhe was gone her life was comparatively ſolitary, ſhe had no one to whom ſhe could ſpeak unreſervedly, whoſe advice ſhe could always aſk and truſt; no one in whoſe converſation ſhe could forget the vexations of the day. Mrs. Stavenell, however attached to her niece, was not a perſon on whoſe judgment ſhe could rely, nor was ſhe capable of affording, to a mind like Conſtance's, any intellectual ſatisfaction: Lady Maria's friendſhip ſhe had experienced, but the fear of Lord Farnford prevented ſuch an intimacy as they both wiſhed: ſhe hardly ever called on his ſiſters without ſeeing him,

him, and though there was nothing in his behaviour at which she could reasonably be offended, she was convinced that a very little relaxation of the restraint she assumed towards him would encourage him, and she had too much reason to believe that should her suspicions of Lord Reycolm be either known or confirmed, she would be subjected to all the importunity she had for some time repressed, which aided by Mrs. Stavenell's partiality for Lord Farnford, would, if Lord Reycolm should avow a a change of sentiment, oblige her to return to Marstonbury.

About the time when she expected him in town, she received letters from Sir Edward and Lady Barbara Fitzarthur, by which she learnt that he had been with them, and that every thing respecting the intended marriage was agreed on; even the time was fixed, which was to be in a few months: this precipitation did not please Constance, who wished to be assured that Lord Reycolm was perfectly satisfied; nothing however in her father's letter indicated his having discovered any alteration in him, Lady Barbara mentioned the depression of his spirits, but seemed convinced it was only a temporary indisposition. Angry therefore at herself for supposing she had so much sagacity as to perceive that, which had escaped the observation of those so interested for her, she believed she had done Lord Reycolm injustice, and endeavoured to divest herself of her former prejudicial opinion, in order to

judge fairly and candidly of him when she should see him.

In the morning of Mademoiselle Rousson's departure, the grief of the two ladies was so great as to disable the one from making, and the other from assisting in any necessary preparations for it: after a thousand promises of unchangeable friendship and wishes that their separation might not be long, Constance, forgetting in her sorrow her resolution to say nothing that indicated the discovery she had made, said,—*Can* you not, or *will* you not give me any hope that we may soon meet again?—Adelaide made no reply.—Tell me, said Constance, will you return?—will Mr. Stavenell bring you back again?—Apparently embarrassed by this question, Mademoiselle Rousson answered:—Do not ask me:—I cannot tell;—I know nothing, Constance said no more; a summons to breakfast called her away, and Adelaide, desiring her to go first, said she would follow her immediately.

At the foot of the stairs a servant met Miss Fitzarthur, and told her Lord Reycolm was in the parlour: she was rather vexed at this mal-a-propos visit, at a time when she did not wish for witnesses of her sorrow, and it was too great to be concealed; but there was no possibility of avoiding seeing him, and she went into the room: he looked rather better than when he left town, and behaved more rationally, said he had returned but the preceeding night from his father's, excused his not having called

led then by the late hour at which he arrived, and with much earneſtneſs inquired why Miſs Fitzarthur's countenance wore ſo melancholy an appearance.—Oh! ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, you muſtn't mind it, we've had a young laſs with us, and ſhe's going away, ſo my niece has been treating her with a ſweet cry.

Lord Reycolm had accepted an invitation to ſtay breakfaſt, and juſt as Mrs. Stavenell had accounted to him for her niece's looks, Mademoiſelle Rouſſon, whom he had never yet ſeen, came in: on her opening the door ſhe perceived a ſtranger, and not caring to expoſe thoſe feelings which could not be ſuppreſſed, and were ſtill more painful if reſtrained, ſhe was retiring, hoping that, as the perſon ſat with his back towards her, ſhe had not been ſeen; but Mrs. Stavenell deſiring her to come in, and ſaying,—It's only Lord Reycolm,—he won't bite you:—ſhe again advanced, and had ſcarcely entered the room when he riſing and looking earneſtly at her, exclaimed:—Gracious God! are you not my Adelaide?—She raiſed her eyes and ſaying,—O Dieu aide-moi:—would have fallen to the ground had he not caught her. The curioſity which this ſcene excited was forced to give way to concern for her: ſhe ſoon recovered, and burſting into tears remained unable to ſpeak: Lord Reycolm again addreſſed himſelf to her, ſaying—Speak—tell me I am not deceived—tell me you are Mademoiſelle Rouſſon,—O cruel, wicked Mr. Beſworth—was all Adelaide could reply.

—Do not call me ſo, ſaid Lord Reycolm, I do not deſerve it.—Are you not then Mr. Beſworth? ſaid ſhe:—if you are you muſt deſerve to be called cruel —I am he, his Lordſhip anſwered, and could I hope you are ſtill the ſame unchanged Adelaide Rouſſon, I ſhould be happy.

Mr. Stavenell now came in, and ſeeing by Mademoiſelle Rouſſon's countenance, and the confuſion in the room, that ſome accident had happened, he ſaid to her:—What is the matter, ma belle Françoiſe?—why you look ſadly:—theſe are not travelling looks.—O Charles—ſaid Lord Reycolm, relieve my anxious curioſity, and tell me how ſhe came hither,—How ſhe came? Mr. Stavenell repeated, not underſtanding his queſtion:—ſhe came poſt.—You trifle with me, replied Lord Reycolm, who brought her here?—*I* brought her here, ſaid Mr. Stavenell.—Then returned his lordſhip, you are the cauſe of all the miſery I have ſuffered:—did ſhe not quit Calais with you?—She did, Mr. Stavenell anſwered; but how can I have been the cauſe of *your* ſuffering?—You are the cauſe, Lord Reycolm replied warmly, and nothing ſhall prevail on me to ſubmit tamely to this outrageous injury. —What injury? ſaid Mr. Stavenell: be cool and explain yourſelf, and I will convince you.—I am convinced, his Lordſhip returned,—too well convinced,—but was it not baſe to take an advantage of my abſence?—Are you then the man who ſo cruelly deſerted Mademoiſelle Rouſſon? ſaid her protector.

—I did

—I did not desert her, Lord Reycolm replied; I was prevented from meeting her, and you prevailed on her to accept you in my stead:—I leave her with you, but you shall answer for it.—Miss Fitzarthur, said he, addressing himself to her, if I have not proved myself too great a scoundrel, may I beg to speak to you in another place.—No, replied Constance, first hear what Mr. Stavenell can say,—it is very fit this affair should be immediately explained, and to my knowledge his conduct deserves your thanks instead of your anger:—How your lordship can clear yourself of the charge of deserting Mademoiselle Rousson, you best know: you should at least do that, before you become an accuser.—I have not Charles's phlegmatic disposition, he answered, nor do I suppose he could bear such an injury more cooly; but I will endeavour to be calm:—I will hear him,—but if he fails in his justification, I trust he will not refuse me the only satisfaction I can receive.—With all my heart you shall have it, replied Mr. Stavenell, on condition that you immediately account to this lady for your desertion of her:—I will then, and not till then, tell you how I met with her, and give you any other satisfaction you can desire.

CHAP. XVIII.

EXPLANATION.

DURING this colloquy, in which each was an accuſer, and each a defendant, Mrs. Stavenell had remained ſilent, and aſtoniſhed; Adelaide in tears, and Conſtance with all the anxiety of friendſhip was adminiſtering the means of ſupport to her. Whether the conjecture reſpecting Mr. Stavenell and Mademoiſelle Rouſſon was not erroneous was now doubtful; the firmneſs of his behaviour rather contradicted the ſuppoſition; nothing but ſurpriſe had yet appeared to alter his countenance, and it indicated only a deſire to reſtore her to peace, and to exculpate himſelf.

Lord Reycolm, conſenting to his propoſition, ſeating himſelf by Adelaide, ſaid to her:—You may remember I wrote to inform you when and where I could meet you, and to tell you that I was going for a few days to a friend's houſe, from whence I ſhould not return till the day before that when I was to be with you: Two days after I wrote that letter I had a fall from my horſe, and was ſo hurt as to be confined to my bed near a fortnight: of what paſſed during the firſt ten days I am wholly inſenſible: but in my firſt interval of reaſon I recollected my engagements with you, and

on

on aſking what day of the week it then was, I found the time I had fixed was already elapſed: I immediately diſpatched my own ſervant, who uſed to bring you my letters, to Calais, hoping that you might poſſibly be ſtill at the inn, but to my inexpreſſible mortification learned that you had ſailed that morning with an Engliſh gentleman; I could get no farther information, and determined to riſque the conſequence of following you, ill as I was; but as I could not reveal the motives to this hazardous undertaking, all my efforts were conſidered as a return of my delirium, and of courſe were vigorouſly oppoſed; this diſappointment increaſed the fever which was before conſiderably abated, and confined me another week: the very firſt day that I was allowed to go out I went to Calais, flattering myſelf you had expected to meet me at Dover, and might have left a letter for me, or that you might have returned about that time to Calais, but I could obtain no other ſatisfaction than a confirmation of what I had hear'd; all my endeavours to learn who your fellow traveller was were ineffectual, every one I inquired of told me I ſhould not know, for that my man had ſaid if I found him he was ſure I ſhould kill him. I then reſolved on coming to England, and ſailed the next day: I was informed by a gentleman of my acquaintance, immediately on my landing, and before I went into any houſe, that ſuch a lady as I deſcribed had been ſeen there with

an Engliſh gentleman, and that they went for Canterbury, but whether that was their place of deſtination or only in their way, I could not learn, for I was told that they both affected concealment: I followed to Canterbury and was ſo far fortunate as to go to the houſe where you had changed horſes; but the miſtreſs would tell me nothing more than that a gentleman, a young lady and her maid, had been there; ſhe excuſed herſelf by ſaying the lady had enjoined her not to let any one know what road ſhe went. I then could ſcarcely doubt that you wiſhed to avoid me, yet being ſtill very unwilling to condemn you, I hoped to find you in London, and on my arrival there went to your uncle's houſe, which I found occupied by another family: here I was informed that your uncle was dead, and that his executor had received a letter from you; I ſaw it, and alſo a copy of the anſwer, from which I concluded you could not have come on to London, and as you had intimated in your letter that his diſapprobation of your conduct, or any impediment to his admitting you as one of his family, would oblige you to return to your friends, that you were gone back to Calais. I went again to Dover, and embarked for France, making inquiries of every one, which were wholly fruitleſs, for nobody could tell me more than that I knew.—I continued my journey to Paris, and flattered myſelf you might by this time have written to ſome of your relations, all acceſs to Monſ. Bermond's houſe being denied

denied me I could get no ſatisfaction there, and therefore I applied to ſome of your moſt intimate friends: they were as much at a loſs as myſelf; they had hear'd you were miſſing, and the report was that you had gone with me. The day before I quitted Paris, by means of bribing one of Monſ. Bermond's ſervants, I gained intelligence of a letter by which your mother was informed you were in England; more I could not perſuade the man to tell me.—To England I then returned with all poſſible expedition, and, not knowing where elſe to ſeek you, came to London. I have been in every place in which I thought there was the ſhadow of a probability I might find you, and have aſked every Frenchman I have ſeen if he knew your family; many could tell me you had left Paris, but none whither you were gone; and now, after all my ſearch, I meet you in a houſe where I have ſeveral times been, and find that this Engliſh gentleman who has ſo diſturbed me, is one in whoſe honour and friendſhip I imagined I might have ſafely confided.

And if you will allow me a candid hearing, replied Mr. Stavenell, you will be convinced that I have not deceived your expectations.—I arrived at Calais the day after Mademoiſelle Rouſſon came there,—ſhe ſent me a billet deſiring to ſee me,—ſhe told me her diſtreſs, and begged my protection in the voyage to England:—could I refuſe it?—her aſking it was a compliment, and the exigency of her ſituation demanded every relief I could give her.—

I did as every man of honour would have done, I inſiſted on ſtaying with her till ſhe was in a place of ſafety:—I waited with her an anſwer to the letter ſhe wrote to her uncle, and then, finding his houſe could not afford her an aſylum, I offered her one in my mother's:—hither I brought her, and here ſhe would have remained had not a relation of her's ſent her an invitation to Bourdeaux.—As I ſuppoſe you have only appeared to her as Mr. Beſworth, ſhe did not know you by your title, and though ſhe told us the circumſtances of your deſerting her ſhe never would mention your name:—that you have not ſeen her till now, is owing to the concealment which was neceſſary to prevent the purſuit of her friends, and your being out of town; for ſince her going to Bourdeaux was reſolved on, ſhe has been viſible to all that have come to the houſe:—and now, Lord Reycolm, continued Mr. Stavenell, if I am not juſtified, name the ſatisfaction you expect:—I am ready to give it you.—I aſk nothing, his lordſhip replied, but your forgiveneſs, and that of Mademoiſelle Rouſſon; will you, my Adelaide, admit my excuſe for the breach of my promiſe, and pardon the ſuſpicions I entertained of you?—I can forgive them, ſhe anſwered, ſtill crying, but—Will you then, Lord Reycolm interrupted, allow me in my own perſon to repeat the aſſurances I made you as Mr. Beſworth, and will you perform to me that promiſe which you gave him!—No, no, replied Adelaide, indeed I will not:—they are

two

two different perſons; Mr. Beſworth might marry whom he would, but Lord Reycolm muſt marry Miſs Fitzarthur:—he ſhall not break his word for me.—I am ſorry I have occaſioned ſo much trouble and uneaſineſs where I have been ſo generouſly treated, but I will go to Bourdeaux—How juſtly ſaid Lord Reycolm, does your conduct condemn mine!—I acknowledge my prior engagement to Miſs Fitzarthur, and cannot excuſe my departure from it.—My lord, you are from this moment freed from it, ſaid Conſtance; it was never my intention to hold you bound by it.—You are too generous, interrupted Adelaide, you muſt not do ſo, rather let me reſign Lord Reycolm, I ought to do it, and I will.

Mr. Stavenell now deſired his mother to countermand the orders for the journey, and coming up to Mademoiſelle Rouſſon, he took her hand, and ſaid he wiſhed to have a minute's converſation with her; they went together into the next room, leaving Lord Reycolm to make the beſt of his apology to his couſin. Mrs. Stavenell went away to ſtop the preparations, and Conſtance who felt for the aukwardneſs of Lord Reycolm's ſituation, and was anxious to relieve it, before he could ſpeak ſaid:—the engagement between us certainly ought not to be any impediment to your fulfilling your more recent promiſe to Mademoiſelle Rouſſon; it was entered into in compliance with the wiſhes of your father and mine, who miſtook childiſh fondneſs for ſome-

thing more permanent:—I beg you will not ſuffer any conſideration for me to imbitter a joy which believe me I participate;—I am ſure my father will releaſe you:—you have not broken your word, though you may have altered your intention, for you are ſtill unmarried:—You do me injuſtice if you ſuſpect I ſhall be angry at your preferring her to me- I am only ſorry that I am any obſtacle, and I wiſh that by having been a little leſs reſerved, you would have ſpared me the difficulty of endeavouring to account for your conduct ſince you came to England, but I ſee your embarraſſment muſt have been great, and am rejoiced to find you have ſo very good an apology for your change.

Indeed replied Lord Reycolm, you hold the ſame place in my *eſteem*, and however paradoxical it may appear, I can with truth ſay you hold the ſame place in my *affection*, as you did when I left you at your father's, and it was not till I knew Adelaide that I was conſcious the leaſt particle of either remained unengaged to you:—from an acquaintance with her I learnt the difference between love and friendſhip. I endeavoured by every means to conquer a paſſion which I could never think myſelf juſtified in encouraging, but my efforts were ineffectual, and when I heard that a removal from her mother's houſe was neceſſary, I forgot every other conſideration, and urged her to accompany me to England:—the remembrance that I was doing wrong I ſtifled, by flattering myſelf there was

apoſſibility

poſſibility of your wiſhing yourſelf freed from your engagement to me, and I thought if I brought her to her uncle's I ſhould have leiſure to diſcover your ſentiments: had I perceived any alteration in them, I intended then to acknowledge my affection for her, and, if I did not, I reſolved candidly to tell you how I was ſituated, and to leave it to your generoſity to determine whether you would releaſe me, or oblige me to give up your rival; but on my return to England, I was in ſuch a ſtate of ſuſpence with regard to Mademoiſelle Rouſſon, that I knew not how to behave to you: as ſhe was the only impediment to my renewing my addreſſes to you, if my ſuſpicions of her were well founded, to inform you of what was paſſed would have been needleſs, and might have coſt me the whole of your good opinion; and yet to withdraw my regard from her while I had the leaſt hope that ſhe deſerved it, would have been as cruel as I found it impoſſible: do not ſhame me, Miſs Fitzarthur, with ſaying I have not broken my word to you:—I have not kept it by my own choice; for I will not conceal from you that I offered to marry her, and urged her to it before we left Paris; ſhe would not conſent, and her refuſal has made me appear leſs criminal than I really am.—I am amply repaid, Conſtance anſwered, for whatever painful ſuſpicions your manifeſt coolneſs occaſioned in my mind by the happineſs I am now witneſs to; I ſhould have been inexpreſſibly miſerable if you had found Mademoiſelle Rouſſon

when

when it was not in my power to releaſe you:—we muſt both have been wretched.

Their converſation was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Stavenell.—Well, ſaid ſhe, how is it ſettled?—who is Lord Reycolm to have at laſt?—Oh, Mademoiſelle Rouſſon certainly, replied Conſtance, I have caſt him off entirely.—I am glad of it, Mrs. Stavenell anſwered, 'twas the very thing I wiſhed; now we may all be happy.—Her niece too well underſtood the cauſe of her joy, and who were included in *all*; but occupied as ſhe was with the preſent, ſhe did not look to the future, nor did ſhe foreſee that by this one act of generoſity, ſhe purchaſed to herſelf miſery beyond what ſhe could have imagined. Leſt Mrs. Stavenell ſhould reveal more than ſhe deſired Lord Reycolm to know, ſhe turned her attention to the breakfaſt, which had hitherto remained unregarded; and Mr. Stavenell and Mademoiſelle Rouſſon were called: Mr. Stavenell anſwered that he was coming immediately, the door was left open, and Conſtance who had gone to fetch them, hear'd him ſay to Adelaide:—I inſiſt on it, or I will never ſee you again:—you will only expoſe yourſelf, for I ſhall ſay the ſame there that I do here.—She made no reply, and they came to the breakfaſt table, Mademoiſelle Rouſſon ſtill in tears.

What this indicated Conſtance was afraid to examine; ſhe began to apprehend that Lord Reycolm's refuſal would come from a quarter whence he

he leaſt expected it, and that her conjecture of Adelaide's attachment to Mr. Stavenell was too well founded: inſtead of her agitation ſubſiding after the firſt ſhock, it evidently increaſed; ſhe could eat nothing, and cried vehemently. In a few minutes ſhe went out of the room, and declined Conſtance's offer to accompany her: her behaviour was matter of aſtoniſhment, becauſe it was certainly an unnatural conſequence of joy; but Mr. Stavenell aſcribed it all to her unexpected meeting of Lord Reycolm; and this opinion Miſs Fitzarthur endeavoured to ſupport, though ſhe ſuſpected it was erroneous. When breakfaſt was over ſhe was going up ſtairs to Adelaide, but Mr. Stavenell following and ſtopping her, took her into the back parlour, and ſaid to her —From what I have obſerved and what I have learnt, I am ſure you know too much of Mademoiſelle Rouſſon's affairs to attribute her uncommon perturbation to *joy*:—I may ſafely truſt you with my confidence, and will therefore tell you ingenuouſly whence it ariſes, and what I am reſolved to do: ſhe ſays you put a queſtion to her this morning which embarraſſed her, and convinced her that your ſagacity had diſcovered our inclinations:—it is therefore needleſs for me to own what were my intentions and views; whatever they were, her meeting with Lord Reycolm is an effectual bar to them; but ſhe has, I am ſorry to ſay, ſome difficulty in accommodating herſelf to this change of circumſtances; ſhe would, with an unaccountable

able caprice, at this moment refuſe Lord Reycolm, and notwithſtanding the ſatisfactory reaſons he gave for his diſappointment of her, and the affection he has manifeſted for her, ſhe would think herſelf obliged to you if you would inſiſt on his performing his engagement to you. I cannot, replied Conſtance, it is impoſſible.—I would not have you do it ſaid he, if it were in your power:—the ſame caprice that makes her wiſh to be rid of him, would perhaps ſoon make her repent her renunciation of him:—with reſpect to myſelf, though my ſucceſs flattered me, and I think myſelf unfortunate, I am not ſo attached to her as to heſitate in determining what is fitteſt to be done:—Lord Reycolm ſhall have her, and I cannot doubt that her mind will ſoon recover itſelf:—with me ſhe would have been unhappy if ever ſhe had met him, for then this capricious humour would have taught her to like him inſtead of me: I wiſh therefore that you would take ſome pains to convince her of her obligation to him; and have told you the whole of this affair that you might adapt your medicines to her diſeaſe. I think it is very probable ſhe may reſent my giving her up; if ſo, ſhe will encourage Lord Reycolm out of ſpite, and that will ſerve, as well as a better motive, to prevent his being uneaſy.—Are you ſure, ſaid Conſtance, that you are doing right in obliging her to accept Lord Reycolm?—ſuppoſing that ſhe ſubmits to the neceſſity with the entiments ſhe at preſent entertains, what is their

proſpect?

proſpect? they will be miſerable.—Truſt me they will not, replied Mr. Stavenell, I will anſwer for it that in a week's time ſhe will be very well ſatiſfied, if not pleaſed: the phyſic may be a little diſagreeable, but it is very ſalutary, and ſhe will thank me for it.—I wiſh, Miſs Fitzarthur anſwered, that you may prove a true prophet, I acknowledge I have ſome doubts, and I cannot attempt perſuading her. Then only leave her to herſelf, ſaid Mr. Stavenell, when ſhe finds that I give her no encouragement ſhe will look to Lord Reycolm; for he has certainly the next beſt place in her affections.—I will do all in my power to make this neceſſary change eaſy to her:—you all know I ought to have been at Portſmouth long before this time, and, as I think ſhe is now ſafe, and no longer needs my protection, I ſhall ſet out as ſoon as I can.—I believe it will be better not to take any notice of what I have told you; I hope my mother has not ſuſpected any particularity between Mademoiſelle Rouſſon and myſelf, and unleſs it is mentioned to you, it will be moſt prudent for us to be ſilent on the ſubject. Conſtance was of Mr. Stavenell's opinion, and in admiration of his conduct left him to viſit Adelaide.

She found her ſitting alone, looking on the ground, and very buſily twiſting the corner of her handkerchief round her finger. With ſome difficulty ſhe perſuaded her to move, and they went together to the room where Lord Reycolm and

and Mr. Stavenell were; the latter of whom quitted his ſeat as they entered, while Lord Reycolm was ſpeaking to Madamoiſelle Rouſſon, ſaid in a low voice to Conſtance—My mother is called away, and will not be here for ſome minutes, let us leave them together, come and take a turn in the park with me..—She ſaw Mr. Stavenell's motive, and agreeing to his propoſition, ſlipped out of the room without Adelaide's perceiving it. The recent events furniſhed ample ſubject for converſation, and on their return Conſtance was much pleaſed to ſee her friend's countenance brightened into a ſmile.

The propriety of immediately informing Mademoiſelle Rouſſon's relation at Bourdeaux of an event which would at leaſt poſtpone her journey, and the neceſſity of communicating it to Lord Drumferne were now to be conſidered: the firſt Mr. Stavenell took on himſelf, promiſing to write before the poſt went; but the latter was a tender point, eſpecially to Lord Reycolm: that Lord Drumferne would conſent to the exchange was problematical; that he would not, was the more probable ſuppoſition, and this point required deliberation.—Let me write to him, ſaid Conſtance, I will try to perſuade him; I can truly tell him it is my wiſh that he ſhould approve what you have done, and, if he thinks it an injury to me, I ſhall deſire him to make me the only reparation by accepting Mademoiſelle Rouſſon in my

ſtead

ſtead.—I muſt tell him perſonally, Lord Reycolm anſwered, and how am I to face him after ſuch a breach of my promiſe? to tell him how good you are would be to arm him againſt me, and to take away all hope of his acquieſcence: the injury I have done you is aggravated by your merit.—Do not talk of that, ſaid ſhe, I do not wiſh to hear my own praiſes: if you will oblige me, ſhew me how I can be of ſervice.—I will go down to my father's, Lord Reycolm replied, and endeavour to convince him, if what I have done has not already, that I am unworthy of you; but I have equal reaſon to fear Sir Edward's reſentment; he may juſtly conſider this as an inſult on his daughter.—I hope, ſaid ſhe, when he knows how ſincerely I rejoice in what has happened, he will not think harſhly of it.—I would, ſaid his lordſhip, go immediately to Marſtonbury, but that it is neceſſary I ſhould ſee my father firſt; I muſt therefore write, and follow my letter as ſoon as I can.—The ſettlement of theſe affairs was then concluded by his determining to ſet out the next morning for Lord Drumferne's: Adelaide was to ſtay till his return at Mrs. Stavenell's, and, as no excuſe leſs than he had hitherto had, could excuſe her ſon's abſence from Portſmouth, it was agreed that he ſhould call on Lord Reycolm, and that, as far as their way lay in the ſame track, they ſhould travel together.—Adelaide's wavering mind ſeemed

now

now fixed; she parted from Lord Reycolm with regret, and he set out from Mrs. Stavenell's with the wishes of all for his success.

CHAP. XIX.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE scene which was now opened to Constance's view, was very different from that to which she had for some years been accustomed: she felt no regret at renouncing her expectations; the happiness which she hoped she promoted absorbed every idea of that kind, and her own pleasure had been unalloyed but for the fear of Lord Farnford's persecution; she foresaw the only obstacle which he regarded being now removed, she should be exposed to his, Lady Emma's, and Mrs. Stavenell's solicitation: to withstand these efforts united was possible, because her dislike of Lord Farnford was great; but to live tolerably under them was not to be expected: the only hope she entertained was, that when he was convinced of her real opinion, he would be discouraged, and after some time leave her in peace; and her only eligible alternative, if he persisted, was to inform her father of her situation, and desire to return

to Marſtonbury; a meaſure which, however militant to her wiſhes, ſhe reſolved to put in execution, as ſoon as his lordſhip grew troubleſome.

Lord Reycolm and Mr. Stavenell ſet off together, and agreed to return about the ſame time: the abſence of the latter had the effect he intended: Adelaide ſeemed not only reconciled to, but happy in her ſituation, ſhe continued the life ſhe had for the preceeding fortnight led, and was every where received as the future wife of Lord Reycolm. Conſtance was very much rejoiced to find that no diſagreeable change in Lord Farnford's behavior followed the communication of theſe events to him: he treated her with more reſpect than ever, and ſhe, willing to ſhew him that ſhe marked and approved his conduct, relaxed as much of the *hauteur* ſhe aſſumed towards him, as ſhe thought ſhe might prudently. Lord Calorne, when he had mentioned to her what he had heard concerning Lord Reycolm, highly applauded her renunciation; but hinted his regret that this accident muſt in ſome meaſure leſſen the intimacy between them: his behaviour conformed to his ſenſe of propriety; the diſtance with which he treated her was increaſed, and he ſeemed carefully to avoid all civility that bore the appearance of perſonality. Lady Maria Peryton, while ſhe rejoiced in every improvement of Conſtance's ſituation, was uneaſy for her; ſhe had apprehenſions reſpecting Lord Farnford, and frequently warned her leſt ſhe ſhould

think herſelf too ſecure to make caution neceſſary. Lady Emma's hopes were raiſed, her perſeverance was ſtrengthened, and her brother's paſſion, ever the topic of her private converſation with Miſs Fitzarthur: thus ſometimes encouraged by Lord Farnford's attention to decorum to think Lady Maria's ſuſpicions groundleſs, at other times alarmed by them, and teazed by Lady Emma's importunity, ſhe was frequently pleaſed, terrified, and vexed in the ſpace of twelve hours.

Lord Reycolm performed his promiſe of writing as ſoon as he knew his father's ſentiments, and to the infinite joy of all intereſted for him, they learnt that Lord Drumferne's conduct had been ſuch as his ſon wiſhed; he profeſſed himſelf very ready to accept of the ſubſtitution, provided it was, as Lord Reycolm repreſented it, with Conſtance's voluntary concurrence; the pleaſure which this event gave Adelaide was greater than her friend had expected, ſhe received the intelligence with appearance of joy, and could not conceal her anxiety leſt Sir Edward Fitzarthur's diſpoſition to acquieſcence ſhould he leſs than Lord Drumferne's; but this, Conſtance, who had written to her father, aſſured her ſhe had no reaſon to fear, ſhe had ſtated to him how much he would oblige her by diſcharging Lord Reycolm from his engagement, and from his well-known inclination to indulge her, ſhe ventured to become reſponſible for his compliance.

But in this, however good the foundation of her hopes, ſhe was deceived; her letter was anſwered in a ſtyle far different from her expectations, Sir Edward accuſed Lord Reycolm of a ſcandalous evaſion of his promiſe, and ſaid it was abſurd to aſk his conſent to a buſineſs which he knew would be concluded whether he gave or with-held it; that all his proſpect for her was ruined, and, however inclined ſhe might fooliſhly be to acquit Lord Reycolm, his conduct to her had been ſuch as nothing could excuſe, and ſuch as, if ſhe had the ſpirit ſhe ought to have, ſhe would reſent: that he ſaw plainly Lord Drumferne's love of money would prevail on him to think very favourably of his ſon's breach of his word, as Mademoiſelle Rouſſon's fortune was immediately her own: the letter concluded exactly as it began in terms of aſperity, and expreſſions of diſappointment.

Conſtance was much mortified at finding her father's ſentiments ſo contrary to thoſe ſhe had almoſt pledged herſelf to enſure for Lord Reycolm; whoſe offence was not, ſhe thought very glaring, and that it ſhould be ſo ſevere a diſappointment to Sir Edward aſtoniſhed her: Mrs. Stavenell had inſinuated, on her firſt coming to her, that it was not deemed by the world a very advantageous match for her: Lord Drumferne's eſtate, it was well known, was but juſt ſufficient to ſupport his title in the place where he lived, and in London could not have done it; he was not an

Engliſh

Engliſh peer, nor had his family antiquity to boaſt: he was himſelf a man whom her father ſhe was ſure diſliked; they had differed on political ſubjects, and the only links which held them together were their mutual relation to Lady Barbara, and Lord Reycolm's early attachment to his couſin. Why therefore, all theſe circumſtances conſidered, Sir Edward ſhould incline to reſentment, was a queſtion ſhe could not ſolve, but ſhe hoped that it would ſubſide, and that Lord Reycolm's viſit at Marſtonbury would reconcile them.

It was in vain to attempt keeping Adelaide ignorant of the contents of this letter; ſhe was hurt at Sir Edward's anger, and would hardly admit Conſtance's perſuaſions to believe it was an effuſion of diſappointment, and that Lord Reycolm's account would be more favourable: the event proved Adelaide's incredulity juſtifiable, Sir Edward had anſwered Lord Reycolm's letter in the moſt reproachful language, and poſitively refuſed to ſee him: his abſence from town was therefore ſhortened, and he returned to Mrs. Stavenell's in a week.

Sir Edward had expreſſed no intention of obliging Lord Reycolm to the performance of his promiſe, nor had he releaſed him from it: it was therefore neceſſary that ſomething, equivalent to his conſent ſhould be procured; and for this purpoſe his daughter wrote to him, in ſuch terms as ſhe thought beſt calculated to appeaſe him; he anſwered

anſwered her letter, but his anger was very little abated, he repeated his expreſſions of diſappointment and to her requeſt, for his acquieſcence only replied, that he ſhould be mad to inſiſt on Lord Reycolm's marrying her, as, ſuppoſing he could compel him to it, ſhe could expect nothing but the worſt uſage from him. This, however harſh, was in effect a diſavowal of any intention which could oppoſe her wiſhes, and it was rendered leſs unpleaſant by a letter from her mother which accompanied it. Lady Barbara rejoiced in Lord Reycolm's having found Mademoiſelle Rouſſon, commended her daughter's conduct, and excuſed his, adding, that her diſappointment was not great, for that, although ſhe had forborne making objections, a marriage between ſuch near relations ſhe could not heartily approve. This opinion, and the terms in which it was conveyed, mitigated the effects of Sir Edward's ſeverity, and his daughter begged that no more might be ſaid on the ſubject.

Adelaide who wiſhed much, as ſhe had now nothing to apprehend from perſecution, that the breach with her mother might be healed, wrote her a circumſtantial account of what had paſſed, entreating that ſhe might be allowed to ſee her, and offering, if her requeſt was granted, to return immediately: to her making this propoſition Lord Reycolm conſented, on condition that before ſhe went ſhe would give him a title to accompany her: of this overture to peace Madame Bermond

took no notice, and Adelaide who was beyond expreſſion mortified, committing herſelf to the guidance of Lord Reycolm, referred wholly to him the care of what belonged to her, and which her preſence in France was now neceſſary to ſecure. A day but a few diſtant was named for their marriage, and Mr. Stavenell, who was not yet returned, was deſired to be in town, that he who had been the guardian of Mademoiſelle Rouſſon, might exerciſe the laſt act of his power by beſtowing her on Lord Reycolm. An excuſe inſtead of acquieſcence was the anſwer: Mr. Stavenell ſaid his buſineſs would not admit of his abſence from Portſmouth, but that, as he thought any delay might occaſion miſchief, he would depute Lord Calorne to this office, and would write to aſk him to accept it. Miſs Fitzarthur, who ſaw a better reaſon for what Mr. Stavenell did, than he acknowledged, applauded ſecretly his prudence, and was very glad that Adelaide's conſtancy, which ſeemed now eſtabliſhed, would receive no more ſhocks. Lord Calorne very readily undertook to be Mr. Stavenell's repreſentative: the ceremony was performed on the day appointed, and immediately after it Lord Reycolm and his wife ſet off for Lord Drumferne's, where they propoſed ſtaying a few days, and then continue their journey to Paris.

A *little* comforted by the hope that as England was to be the place of Lord Reycolm's reſidence,

dence, this was but a temporary and a ſhort ſeparation, and *greatly*, by reflecting on it as the completion of his happineſs, Conſtance bid adieu to the pleaſure ſhe had enjoyed in the ſociety of Mademoiſelle Rouſſon: though ſhe felt much at the hour of parting, ſhe ſummoned all her courage, and, to ſpare her friend's ſuffering, affected an air of chearfulneſs; but when ſhe was gone, and the hurry of departure ceaſed, as if ſhe had been aware that this was a fatal blow to the peace and tranquillity ſhe had hitherto been bleſſed with, ſhe became abſorbed in grief.

Mrs. Stavenell, would not, however, ſuffer her long to indulge thus; ſhe herſelf had none of thoſe weakneſſes which though painful, afford pleaſure; her ridicule was called forth to correct her niece, whom ſhe ſoon forced, at leaſt in her preſence, to ſuppreſs her tears: to find ſome one who would ſympathize with her, Conſtance propoſed making a viſit to Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton, from whom her attention had been for ſome time diverted; but this Mrs. Stavenell, contrary to her uſual cuſtom, oppoſed: her reaſon for it ſhe kept a ſecret, and Conſtance ſeeing it not perfectly agreeable to her, gave up the intention.

CHAP. XX.

ANGER.

AS Mrs. Stavenell and her niece were the next morning ſitting at work together, in a room next the ſtreet, they heard a carriage coming uncommonly faſt, and with a noiſe that excited their curioſity, Conſtance got up to the window, and, juſt as Mrs. Stavenell had ſaid—Whoſe is it? a thundering knock at the door informed them it was coming there: a poſt-chaiſe and four preſently appeared, and Conſtance ſaw it was Lord Farnford's?—Where can Lord Farnford have been, ſaid ſhe, it is his carriage, it is ſplaſhed all over, and he has hired horſes.—We ſhall know I gueſs, Mrs. Stavenell anſwered: I'll go down and meet him.—She went away, and her niece remained at the window. Lord Farnford jumped out of the chaiſe, with his pocket book in his hand, and ran into of the houſe: in about ten minutes he and Mrs. Stavenell came up ſtairs, and Conſtance heard him ſay as they croſſed the outer room—Inſure me ſucceſs and I am the happieſt creature living. They entered the room where Miſs Fitzarthur was, ſhe roſe, and Lord Farnford advanced towards her. My dear, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, here's Lord Farnford juſt come to town.—Your lordſhip has come a great

great way, ſaid Conſtance, if I may judge by the appearance of your equipage.—I have travelled, he replied, thirty-ſix hours without ſtopping for any thing more than to change horſes, and to tranſact the buſineſs I went on; and in that time have been two hundred and ſixty miles.—Some urgent occaſion ſaid Miſs Fitzarthur; no accident in your family, I hope.—No accident, he anſwered, but very urgent buſineſs: I was deſired, madam, to give this letter to you. Conſtance took a letter which he offered her, and immediately knowing the ſuperſcription to be of her father's writing, ſhe ſtarted and aſked permiſſion to read it. certainly ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, on whoſe countenance a ſignificant ſmile was viſible, 'twas given you to read. She then opened it, and found the contents theſe:

'Dear Daughter,

'The mortification and diſappointment which 'Lord Reycolm's inexcuſable departure from his 'word has occaſioned me is in ſome meaſure com- 'penſated, and my anxiety for you leſſened by a pro- 'poſal which Lord Farnford has done me the honour 'of a journey hither to make to me: he aſks my 'permiſſion to declare himſelf a candidate for your 'favour, which I have without heſitation granted 'him, and have promiſed to be his advocate with 'you.

'I truſt I need ſay little to convince you how 'highly for your intereſt ſuch a match will be:

'it is beyond my moſt ſanguine expectations for 'you, both with reſpect to rank and fortune, his 'eſtate is, he aſſures me, unincumbered, and its 'annual amount 25,000l. Think what an eſtab- 'liſhment this is, and then judge how much I am 'delighted with the proſpect.

'What your ſentiments reſpecting Lord Farn- 'ford are, I know not: from what he tells me I 'ſuppoſe you are intimately acquainted with him; 'but, either from diffidence of his own power, or 'from an idea that what I ſay will have great 'weight with you, he does not chuſe to mention 'his wiſhes without ſome authority from me. I 'am pleaſed with his candour, and with him; and, 'if I am not very much deceived, his affection 'for you would alone entitle him to your regard: 'my ſiſter's attachment to him and to you are 'proofs that he is deſerving of you; you have 'ever repreſented her kindneſs to you as very 'great, and I cannot therefore doubt that in fa- 'vouring Lord Farnford ſhe promotes your in- 'tereſt.

'I ſhall impatiently wait an anſwer from you, 'and expect to learn your genuine ſentiments. 'Your mother joins in love to my ſiſter and to 'you, with

'Your very affectionate father,

'EDWARD FITZARTHUR.'

The ſurpriſe, the confuſion, and indignation which this diſcovery of the buſineſs for which,

and

and the place whither, Lord Farnford had ſo expeditiouſly travelled, excited in Conſtance, inſtantaneouſly manifeſted themſelves in her countenance. When ſhe had read the letter ſhe put it in her pocket, and took up her work without ſaying a word.—Well my dear, ſaid her aunt, what news? why your letter ſeems to have diſturbed you.—It has indeed, madam, replied Conſtance; the contents of it are equally unexpected and diſagreeable; but it is very eaſily anſwered.—How? my dear madam, ſaid his lordſhip eagerly.—By doing as my father bids me, ſhe returned, by giving him my genuine ſentiments.—And what are they, he aſked.—I am ſure, Conſtance replied, it is unneceſſary for me to tell you what they are, my lord.—It is indeed, ſaid he, the reception you have given his letter is a ſufficient indication of what they are, and confirms my apprehenſions that I ſhould find you ſtill the ſame cruel obdurate Miſs Fitzarthur; remember your father is my friend, and I doubt not he will effect a relaxation of your ſeverity.—If, anſwered ſhe, your lordſhip could be mean enough to rely on my father's authority, you would ſoon ſee your error, he has an undoubted right to controul all my actions, but he can have no dominion over my mind; nor will he, I am convinced, one moment urge the purport of his letter, when he knows how contrary it is to my inclination—his parental anxiety for my happineſs, and the deception of

ſpecious appearances have miſled him; he will ſoon be better informed, and I hope, as you thought his patronage neceſſary in this inſtance, you will pay equal deference to his authority when he deſires you to deſiſt: your lordſhip was not ignorant of my opinion on the ſubject, and I muſt tell you that I cannot look on this privately obtaining the ſanction of his approbation as any other than a very unhandſome method of endeavouring to impoſe on my judgment, and ſuch as no gentleman would have adopted: it has however failed, and ever will fail.

To rid herſelf of the painful taſk of diſputation ſhe would now have quitted the room; but Mrs. Stavenell ſeeing her riſing, interpoſed, ſaying—I deſire Miſs, that we may have none of your tragedy airs: to talk ſo to Lord Farnford, and then to fling out of the room in a paſſion, is a kind of way of behaviour I don't underſtand: for goodneſs ſake what ails you? what is it you're angry at? a mighty affront I can but ſay: God keep me from ſuch touchy people.—Unwilling to offend her, Conſtance ſat down again; and Lord Farnford, not at all diſcouraged by this manifeſtation of her diſlike to him, drew his chair cloſe to her, and endeavoured to ſooth her: it was in this ſituation that Mrs. Stavenell, with an unpardonable degree of inſenſibility and imprudence, left her and went out of the room: her preſence, it was true, was no reſtraint on Lord Farnford, but it

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was an ideal ſecurity to her niece, who now again attempted to riſe, when he ſeizing her hand, with his natural impetuoſity, ſwore ſhe ſhould not go: you muſt not leave me he ſaid in your preſent diſpoſition; you muſt, Miſs Fitzarthur, hear me: you are not ignorant of my love for you; and if I have erred in what I have done, impute it to my fear of loſing you. I knew the influence Sir Edward had over you, and ſurely I was not very wrong in trying to win him on my ſide: did you not once ſay, that ſuppoſing you were not engaged to Lord Reycolm, your father's judgement would be the rule of your conduct?—Certainly Conſtance replied, it ought in general to be ſo, but not in this inſtance, where my reſolutions are formed on ſuch principles as he himſelf would approve and ſupport, were he unbiaſſed.—Your opinion, he returned, has no other foundation than prejudice.—It is founded on reaſon ſaid ſhe, and is unalterably fixed: I am certain, my father would never, in ſuch a caſe command my obedience, and as certain, that while allowed to exerciſe my own judgment, I ſhall ever think and act as I do now.—You ſhall not, replied Lord Farnford, with an oath: on you the future happineſs of my life depends, and I will not quit you till you relent.—Mrs. Stavenell is my friend, I have your father's approbation and authority, and of theſe I ſhall avail myſelf in full force: ſurely, for all the anxious, the ſleepleſs hours which I paſſed while

thought you another's, I deſerve ſomething leſs harſh than your refuſal to hear me: when I knew that you were offended by my enjoying the little freedom you allowed me, I forbore even that, and have ſuffered in ſilence; but a longer ſilence it would be unreaſonable and uſeleſs in you to expect, and in me to impoſe on myſelf; and if you remain inflexible, I ſhall impute it to another cauſe.—To what cauſe? ſaid Miſs Fitzarthur.—Calorne loves you, his lordſhip anſwered, and you return his paſſion.—You are groſsly deceived, replied ſhe; my ſentiments are not the conſequence of any other attachment, they are ſuch as my acquaintance with you has produced.—In the firſt fact, ſaid Lord Farnford, I will ſwear I am not deceived: that Calorne entertains a paſſion for you he himſelf would not deny; and my belief that you accept it is well founded; you own your friendſhip for him, I know it is more than friendſhip; and you can have no other excuſe for uſing me ſo ill.—Conſtance remained ſilent, and he continued—Your ſilence is an additional proof of my aſſertion: he has ſecretly obtained your affections, and he ſhall anſwer for ſupplanting me.

Not to ſpeak now, however uninclined Conſtance found herſelf to hold any converſation with Lord Farnford, was criminal, and might be attended with ſerious conſequences to Lord Calorne: ſhe therefore replied—that whoever had given him ſuch information had impoſed on him; that ſo far

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was what he ſuſpected from being true, it was a ſubject on which Lord Calorne had never ſpoken to her, nor did ſhe believe it had ever entered his imagination, for that, ſince her engagement to Lord Reycolm had been diſſolved, if there was any difference in Lord Calorne's behaviour, it rather indicated a fear of being thought to entertain ſuch ſentiments.—Is this true indeed? ſaid Lord Farnford, looking ſtedfaſtly at her.—Your doubting it, Conſtance replied, is an inſult,—I ſcorn to deceive you or any one; but if I muſt accommodate my aſſurances to your incredulity, that you may not remain in this error, I will ſay that on my honour it is true.

I am ſatisfied anſwered he, and am obliged to you for your condeſcenſion,—now tell me ingenuouſly to what cauſe am I to attribute your averſion to me?—To your own conduct, ſhe replied:—my averſion, as you term it, is not natural; it is the conſequence of a very ſuperficial inveſtigation of your lordſhip's libertine character,—and may heaven defend me from knowing more of it.—I am ſure my father will readily admit the objections I ſhall make.—I own, he ſaid, after a pauſe, that they are ſtrong objections to one who has been educated with ſuch rigid notions, yet, as you ſay your averſion is not natural, may I not hope it is removeable?—the effect muſt ceaſe with the cauſe, and the cauſe ſhall ceaſe.—I do not pretend, Miſs Fitzarthur, to have led a very regular life hitherto, you ſhall have

the merit of reforming me—it depends on you to determine whether I ſhall continue or abandon my mode of life:—ſpeak but a word, and from this moment I bid an eternal adieu to every irregularity. —The cauſe may ceaſe, Conſtance replied, and the effect ſtill ſubſiſt:—our forgetting and even abandoning our errors will not obliterate them:—the taſk of reformation is too arduous for me to undertake, were I inclined to it, and to ſpare all farther altercating, as your lordſhip has done me the juſtice to believe me in one inſtance, give me but the like credit when I aſſure you, that all the prayers and proteſtations with which you may chuſe to importune me will be inefficacious—my reſolution is fixed, and I muſt loſe my ſenſes before I change it.

Mrs. Stavenell now entering with Lady Emma Peryton, aſked how the two good folks had ſettled it, and was anſwered by her niece that ſhe hoped Lord Farnford was convinced of the truth of that in which ſhe had uniformly perſiſted: Lady Emma then taking her brother's part, began to remonſtrate with Conſtance, who yet remained firm, told her ladyſhip how uſeleſs all ſhe could ſay would be, and repreſented the cruelty of their importuning her. While his ſiſter and Miſs Fitzarthur were thus engaged, Lord Farnford had retired with Mrs. Stavenell to a window at the other end of the room, and they were in cloſe converſation when, preſently he, taking his hat, went away without ſpeaking to either of the two ladies: Lady Emma ſoon after

after followed him, and Conſtance was left to Mrs. Stavenell, who for upwards of an hour exerted all her eloquence in behalf of her favourite, condemning in ſevere terms, her niece's obſtinacy.

CHAP. XXI.

ENTREATY.

IT was now that Conſtance heartily repented her having foreborne to repreſent Lord Farnford's character in its true and odious colours to her father:—ſhe had believed that if her friends at Marſtonbury knew that her ſituation in town was rendered diſagreeable by his conduct, ſhe ſhould be required to return home, but, as this was a ſacrifice of much pleaſure, for the ſake of avoiding what at that time was but a ſmall evil, ſhe had in her letters ſaid nothing that indicated uneaſineſs, and it was to this omiſſion that ſhe ſuppoſed her father's acceptance of Lord Farnford was owing: ſhe now, though the path ſhe was to purſue was too plainly marked out to need an adviſer, wiſhed much for the preſence of ſome one who would encourage her: but her wiſhes were vain: Mrs. Stavenell was no protection to her, Lady Maria Peryton ſhe could not,

not, except by chance, and when perhaps ſhe had no opportunity of converſation with her, ſee otherwiſe than by going to her brother's houſe, which was running into the miſchief ſhe ſtrove to avoid: Lady Emma's abilities, ſmall as they were, were directed againſt her, and to add to her diſtreſs there was now no proſpect of Mr. Stavenell's return:—his ſhip had been unexpectedly ordered on a cruiſe, and ſo ſuddenly that he had not even time to return to London. There was no one of her acquaintance whoſe power and inclination ſhe imagined herſelf capable of intereſting for her, beſide Lord Calorne, and here her delicacy interpoſed; ſhe valued his good opinion, of which ſuch an act as aſking his protection would ſhe feared hazard the loſs, and many other conſiderations ſtrengthening her reluctance to avail herſelf of his friendſhip, ſhe was left to the guidance of her own diſcretion, and the ſupport of conſcious rectitude of intention.

In the evening of this day ſhe wrote to her father; ſhe told him her diſlike of Lord Farnford, and that it was founded on the unprincipled libertiniſm of his character; that ſhe was certain, however he might have appeared on a firſt interview, an enlarged knowledge of him would ſhew the impoſition, and ſhe concluded with begging that his importunity might be ſtopped by the ſame authority which had permitted it.

Not doubting that the return of the poſt would free her from her painful ſituation, ſhe prepared herſelf

ſelf to bear it till then with fortitude, and was not a little pleaſed to hear in the morning, from her aunt, that Lord Farnford reſented her behaviour: this information was accompanied by a warning that ſhe would repent what ſhe had done; but ſhe, convinced that no repentance could *be* ſo ſevere as that of marrying a man, whom ſhe not only did not love, but, as far as is conſiſtent with charity, hated, heard all with patience, and without reply: it gave her concern to ſee that Mrs. Stavenell's intereſt in this buſineſs affected her diſpoſition towards her: ſhe was evidently offended, and the kindneſs with which ſhe had till now treated her, was in a great degree withdrawn.

Lady Maria Peryton was an uncommonly long time abſent from Mrs. Stavenell's, and Conſtance, not chuſing to go to her, had no opportunity of telling her what had paſſed: Lord Farnford called twice before Sir Edward's anſwer arrived, but did not come into the room where Miſs Fitzarthur was: —her aunt continued unremittingly her endeavours for him, ſometimes trying perſuaſion, then reproaches, and often warning her to beware of the conſequences of her perverſeneſs.

This unexpected cauſe of vexation ſo far depreſſed Conſtance's ſpirits as entirely to take away all inclination to amuſement; her aunt went therefore unaccompanied to her ſeveral engagements, and left her ample leiſure to contemplate her unpleaſing ſituation: in theſe hours of ſolitude, which the agi-

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tation of her mind forbid her to employ in any way that would render them leſs tedious; ſhe recollected many circumſtances that might, had ſhe underſtood them rightly, have warned her of her danger; the reſpect with which Lord Farnford had affected to treat her before Lord Reycolm went away, ſhe now ſaw was but a prelude to his ſcheme, and Mrs. Stavenell's unuſual oppoſition of her intention to call on Lady Maria the day before Lord Farnford's arrival was now explained, as ſhe muſt have heard of his abſence from town, and might have ſuſpected what he and his friends wiſhed to conceal till he declared it.

Sir Edward's anſwer arrived the day when it was expected, and all anxiety on that head his daughter flattered herſelf would end: what then muſt have been her ſurpriſe, when ſhe found that, far from admitting her reaſons, he endeavoured to overcome them, and that his propoſition was ſtrengthened into ſomething not very different from a command! he began by telling her, that by the ſame poſt which brought her letter he had received one from Lord Farnford, communicating the particulars of the reception ſhe had given him, the objection ſhe had made to him, and her refuſal to admit as of any force, his promiſe to correct whatever was the cauſe of her diſlike, and entreating Sir Edward again to become his advocate: he then ſtated afreſh to her the advantage of the offer, ſaid that her accepting it was *neceſſary*, and that *he had reaſons for urging it*,

it, which, if he thought prudent to assign, must have weight with her: he told her it was her little knowledge of the world that made her see Lord Farnford's errors in so magnifying a point of view, that her refined opinions were the consequences of a recluse education, but that she would find herself much mistaken if she imagined they were those of the world; that Lord Farnford's promise of amendment ought to satisfy her, that his love for her was excessive, and that *there were reasons for, which counterbalanced all against, her immediately accepting so very eligible an offer.*

Had not Constance been intimately acquainted with her father's hand-writing, nothing would have persuaded her that this letter, containing doctrine directly opposite to that he had ever maintained, was not a forgery; but the evidence of its authenticity was indubitable, and the perusal of it was followed by a shower of tears: Mrs. Stavenell, who was present with her when it arrived, seeing its effect on her, took it out of her hand, and read it: then began a more forcible repetition of all she had heard on the subject; obstinacy, perverseness, and folly were terms not too harsh to express her aunt's resentment, and Constance retired weeping: she was called to dinner, and, coming into the parlour, saw there the cause of all her uneasiness; the tears were still in her eyes, and she took no notice of him: they sat down almost in silence; she eat nothing, and had she not feared irritating Mrs. Stavenell,

nell, would have left the room: Lord Farnford watched her countenance, and urged her to eat, till his too kind friend desired him to let Miss Fitzarthur do as she chose, and to say nothing to her; he then desisted, and their unsocial meal concluded.

As soon as the cloth was removed, Lord Farnford addressing himself to Constance, said,—What effect, Madam, may I hope Sir Edward's letter has had on you?—It has had that, she replied, bursting into tears, of making me completely unhappy. —For goodness sake, child, said Mrs. Stavenell, don't be ridiculous:—mighty unhappy truly you are!—I warrant you wish you was dead, or had never been born.—My dear Miss Fitzarthur interposed his lordship, I cannot bear to see you in tears, when you might, by overcoming this one unreasonable prejudice, remove every occasion of grief, and make me, your father, and good Mrs. Stavenell so happy:—do but in this instance, as Sir Edward says you have in every action of your life hitherto, obey him, and trust to me you shall have no cause to blame your generosity.—I cannot, my lord, replied Constance, and I am sure it is only to my having failed in representing how miserable such obedience would make me, that what I now suffer is to be attributed:—my father is anxious for my happiness, and you have persuaded him that my compliance will promote it:—I still therefore am certain, that when he is undeceived, he will be as averse

averſe to it as he is now ſtrenuous for it :—his affection for me has been uniform, and I will never believe he could for a moment entertain an idea of obliging me to do that, which he ſhall be convinced, is againſt my inclination :—he may be deceived, but he cannot be arbitrary.

Having given his lordſhip this diſcouraging aſſurance, and finding herſelf unable to bear farther conteſt, ſhe was riſing to leave the room, when Mrs. Stavenell aſked her why ſhe was going.—I am going, ſhe anſwered, becauſe I am very unfit for company, and indeed to avoid the uſeleſs repetition I have ſo often been forced to hear.—You're not fit to be by yourſelf, ſaid Mrs Stavenell, ſo I deſire you'll ſtay here.—Conſtance obeyed, and preſently her aunt, being engaged out for the evening, went away to do ſomething to her dreſs : determined to defeat whatever purpoſe this critical withdrawing might be intended to ſerve, as ſoon as Lord Farnford began to ſpeak, Miſs Fitzarthur haſtily quitted her ſeat, and went out of the room ; ſhe retired to her chamber and reſolved not to go down again while he ſtaid. The perturbation of her mind was for ſome time too great for her to do any thing, but when ſhe had ſufficient command of her hand to guide a pen, ſhe ſat down and wrote as follows to her father :

' Could my honoured father at this moment ſee ' his unhappy daughter, I am ſure he would im- ' mediately relinquiſh his deſign :—for the firſt time ' in my life I find it difficult to obey you, yet, if

' I fail

'fail in this attempt, I have no alternative.—I 'muſt obey you;—and in doing ſo, I muſt ſacri- 'fice every hope of peace in this world.—I am con- 'vinced it is an opinion that, however averſe I may 'at firſt be to complying with, (I am ſorry to ſay, 'your *commands,*) in the end it will prove for my 'advantage, that dictates your letter.—Lord Farn- 'ford's rank and fortune are, I own, infinitely 'above what I could expect:——they are 'equally above what I wiſh;—and what is he 'himſelf? Good heaven, my dear father, you 'know him only by his own report:—is it to be 'ſuppoſed that he would tell you what he knew 'muſt be anſwered by an aſſurance that you would 'never truſt to his care one whom it had coſt ſo 'much anxiety and pains to educate with a fit idea 'of the difference ketween virtue and vice?—Is an 'abandoned libertine,—one who is, I may truly 'ſay, loſt to all ſenſe of ſhame,—who alone depends 'on a matchleſs effrontery, the perſon for whom 'Lady Barbara Fitzarthur with ſuch unremitted 'attention reared her daughter? Can his coronet, 'can his large eſtate annihilate or cancel his 'vices.

'And is my father an advocate for vice?—it 'cannot be:—it is the abſence of it from his 'character that makes him to appearance its advo- 'cate: Lord Farnford promiſes reformation, and 'my father charitably believes him, and in his 'paternal anxiety to promote his child, does vio-

'lence

'lence to himſelf by under-rating the irregularity 'of his life hitherto:—How improbable is it that I 'ſhould have that power over Lord Farnford which 'his reaſon and conſcience have loſt!—he may 'perhaps be ſincere in his intentions, and he might, 'for a ſhort time, fulfil his promiſe, but what a 'riſque is this! and why am I to be expoſed to it? '—my judgment is not controuled by any par-'tiality for him:—the firſt hour I ſaw him his be-'haviour diſguſted me; and though he may not 'be wholly deſtitute of good qualities, and it is 'here the cuſtom to admire him, I ſpeak ſincerely 'when I ſay that were the grave my only alterna-'tive in refuſing him, I would prefer it to the 'horror of marrying ſuch a man.

'If I am to obey—your commands muſt be 'peremptory:—do not make me reſponſible for the 'future calamities of my life by ſubjecting what 'you ſay to two conſtructions, and hazarding my 'miſunderſtanding it.—My father, whoſe affec-'tion I acknowledge with gratitude,—who never I 'believe in thought thwarted my inclination; muſt 'now ſay, that diſregarding his daughter's pray-'ers, and anxious only to raiſe her to a rank of 'which ſhe is not ambitious, he *commands* her to 'marry the man whom of all others ſhe deteſts:— 'if my father can ſay ſo, I, let it coſt what it may, 'will obey him.

'But I am convinced he cannot be cruel, and 'this would be cruelty: I know he will attend to

me

'me, and not urge this again. May I beg, Sir, 'that the return of the poſt may aſſure me of your 'acquieſcence in my wiſh, and that you would 'write to my perſecutor a prohibition of his farther 'perſiſting.

'I intend writing by this conveyance to my mo- 'ther, and am,

'Your moſt obedient,

'CONSTANCE MATILDA FITZARTHUR.'

Her letter to Lady Barbara was this:

'I am ſure my dear mother is unhappy, and yet I 'muſt add to her ſufferings by telling her mine:— 'you undoubtedly know, Madam, what has paſſed 'between my father and Lord Farnford, and have 'ſeen my anſwer to the propoſal: you can judge 'then what I felt when I found my obedience was 'peremptorily required: I have juſt finiſhed writ- 'ing to my father, and this being my laſt reſource, 'I ſtrengthen it by entreating your interpoſition 'to ſave me.

'You do not, you cannot, I am convinced, ap- 'prove my being compelled to an act which I ab- 'hor:—you have taught me to obey the dictates 'of my conſcience, and this loudly forbids my 'compliance, but you have likewiſe taught me that 'obedience is due to my father:—muſt I then obey 'him? muſt I, as he commands me, lay aſide 'all prejudices, enlarge my knowledge of the 'world, learn to think leſs ſeverely; and to eſteem 'Lord Farnford's offer as an honour?—and to

'what purpoſe am I thus to correct my judgment? '—that I may be enabled to promiſe love and obe- 'dience to a man, for whom I have hitherto felt 'nothing nearer affection than pity and contempt, 'and whoſe conduct has, almoſt uniformly, excited 'diſguſt in me. Before this change can be effect- 'ed in my mind I muſt have forgotten all you have 'with ſo much labour imprinted on it. I remem- 'ber at one time, when you feared my regard for 'Lord Reycolm was leſs than it ſhould be, you 'ſaid that if I found in myſelf the leaſt diſinclina- 'tion to him, my becoming his wife was criminal, 'and could only be attended with fatal conſe- 'quences:—your ſentiments I truſt are ſtill the 'ſame; and yet there was a time when I would 'have pledged my life that my father never could 'do an act that I ſhould think arbitrary or ſevere.

'Do, my ever affectionate mother, intercede for 'me:—tell Sir Edward he is forcing me to an 'union with one againſt whom all our ſex ought to 'join.—O Madam, had you ſeen what I have; 'had you ſeen a lovely modeſt ingenuous woman 'whom he has baſely ſeduced;—had you ſeen an 'innocent babe, who claims and is refuſed his pa- 'rental attention;—had you heard him, with a de- 'gree of effrontery ſcarcely credible, firſt prevari- 'cate, and then avow this infant for his own, you 'would ſhudder at the danger I am expoſed to.

'But if you, to whoſe judgment I appeal and 'truſt, can think that vices of this kind are

'counter-

'counterbalanced by his title and fortune, I am ſi-
'lent and will ſubmit:—my father ſeems to have
'ſome hidden reaſon for his command; can there
'be any for ſuch a ſacrifice? if it is neceſſary, I
'beg you will, by recalling me to Marſtonbury
'immediately, withdraw me at leaſt for a time from
'the horrid importunity I am forced to bear;
'perhaps you can reconcile me to my fate;—
'here nothing can.

'Should I be ſo happy as to ſucceed, and indeed
'my expectations are ſanguine, I ſtill muſt beg to
'return home: to remain where Lord Farnford
'has acceſs to me, will be painful, even when I
'know I have nothing to fear, for I am ſure nei-
'ther he nor his friends will be ſoon diſcouraged:
'the kindneſs of his elder ſiſter is very great to me,
'ſhe warned me againſt what I now ſuffer, and by
'acquainting me with his true character has con-
'vinced me that poſitive miſery is the leaſt that can
'be expected from ſuch a connexion.

'What ſhall I ſay more?—I truſt nothing is
'neceſſary:—my tears almoſt obliterate what I
'write, yet they ſhall be ſuppreſſed rather than I
'will forfeit the right of ſubſcribing myſelf

'Your very dutiful daughter,

'CONSTANCE MATILDA FITZARTHUR.'

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

DESPAIR.

HAVING diſpatched theſe letters, Conſtance inquired if Mrs. Stavenell was ſtill at home, and to her great relief, heard that ſhe and Lord Farnford went out together: ſhe gave orders to be denied to every body, and ſpent the evening in ruminating on the change which a few days had wrought in her ſituation: to avoid ſeeing her aunt ſhe went to bed before her return, and thus eſcaped her reproaches.

But the next morning they were renewed. Lord Farnford came in to breakfaſt, and never ceaſed his importunity; all the arguments he could uſe, all the promiſes he could make, were exhauſted, and exhauſted in vain. The hope of receiving a favourable anſwer from her father was the only conſolation that ſupported her during the time ſhe waited for it, againſt the united efforts of his lordſhip, Lady Emma, and Mrs. Stavenell.

At laſt the day on which ſhe expected a return from Marſtonbury arrived, and hope cheered her drooping ſpirits:—the poſt came in;—but no letter for her:—her diſappointment was ſevere beyond any thing ſhe had ever felt, and ſhe conſidered herſelf now as abandoned, even by her mother: ſhe

had avowed her having written, and her expectation of an anſwer on that day; and, as if deſirous of the firſt intelligence, Lord Farnford dined at Mrs. Stavenell's; but Conſtance's diſappointment happened juſt before they ſat down, and ſhe could not ſtay in the room.

So great was Mrs. Stavenell's intereſt in this affair, that while it was pending ſhe had declined almoſt all engagements, and had ſpent that time which ſhould have been devoted to cards and company, in exertions of her rhetorical powers.—It is difficult to determine which of the employments was moſt futile, but which was the moſt criminal is eaſily decided: her intention was however acquitted, even by her whom it moſt injured, for the great kindneſs which ſhe had profeſſed for Conſtance had ſo awakened her gratitude, that ſhe could not perſuade herſelf to believe it aroſe from any thing worſe than an error in judgment, which, as it repreſented this match as deſirable, urged her by all means to promote it.

In the evening of this day of mortification, Lady Maria and Lady Emma Peryton called in, and Conſtance, for the pleaſure of ſeeing the former, whoſe long abſence had occaſioned a ſuſpicion that they were purpoſely kept aſunder, endeavoured to compoſe her ſpirits, and went to the drawing-room in her morning dreſs, which for ſome days ſhe had had no inclination or motive to change.—As ſoon as Lady Maria ſaw her ſhe ſaid, with

with concern and ſurpriſe—My dear Miſs Fitzarthur, what is the matter?—you look ſadly! have you been ill?—'Tis becauſe ſhe won't dreſs herſelf, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, before ſhe could anſwer: I tell her ſhe looks enough to frighten one.—I am ſure, replied Conſtance, my diſhabille will be excuſed, for I am really far from well, and have been ſo for ſeveral days.—I am very ſorry for it, Lady Maria returned:—if I had known it I would have ſent:—I have not ſeen you a great while, but, as whenever I have called, I have been told you were out, I did not ſuſpect your being ill.—Conſtance, whoſe ſuſpicion that Lady Maria was purpoſely kept away was now confirmed, ſhe not having been out of the houſe for a conſiderable time, was juſt going to ſpeak, when Lord Farnford, who was ſtill there, interrupted her, and turned the converſation to ſome foreign ſubject. Preſently Lord Calorne was announced: all Lady Emma's attention was beſtowed on him, while Lord Farnford kept ſo cloſe to Miſs Fitzarthur as effectually to prevent her ſaying any thing he did not hear.

Tea was juſt over when a ſervant came into the room and ſaid, a gentleman below deſired to ſpeak with Miſs Fitzarthur.—Who is it, ſaid Lord Farnford.—I don't know, my lord, the ſervant replied:—The gentleman ſaid, Miſs Fitzarthur did not know him, but he wanted to ſpeak to her on particular buſineſs,—Will you go down alone to a ſtranger? ſaid Lord Farnford to her. She anſwer-

ed—Yes, and went into the parlour. The perſon was a ſtranger to her, and on inquiring his buſineſs ſhe learnt that he was the bearer of a packet from Marſtonbury: he gave her two letters which ſhe took trembling, and he ſaid he had one for Lord Farnford, whoſe addreſs, as it had been committed only to memory, he had forgotten, and wiſhed to know. This was in ſome meaſure a confirmation of her hopes; ſhe told him his lordſhip was then in the houſe, and, if he choſe to deliver it himſelf ſhe would ſend for him, otherwiſe ſhe would deliver it to him: the gentleman gave it her, and, after having ſatisfied her queries reſpecting the health of Sir Edward and Lady Barbary, retired. She ſtaid to read her letters, and opening her father's firſt, as that on which moſt depended, was cheared by the words—'No conſideration on earth ſhall prevail on 'me to make you unhappy even in idea.'—It contained every thing that could ſet her mind at reſt: he regretted this new diſappointment, ſaid how much the proſpect of ſuch an eſtabliſhment for her had pleaſed him; but concluded with an aſſurance that he would never again urge his wiſh, and with telling her that he had written to Lord Farnford, acknowledging his obligation to him, and requeſting the diſcontinuance of his addreſſes. Lady Barbara's letter was equally affectionate with Sir Edward's, whoſe relinquiſhment of his intention appeared to afford her the ſincereſt pleaſure: Conſtance's requeſt to return home was then anſwered.

'What

'What your father's reaſons for wiſhing for this 'match are, I hardly know. I ſhould have thought, 'even if it had been *your* wiſh, he never would 'have conſented to it; his diſappointment reſpect-'ing Lord Reycolm has hurt him much; he 'thinks your leaving Mrs. Stavenell now would be 'imprudent, as it might diſoblige her, which he 'bids me tell you, muſt on no account be done: he 'is ſatisfied you will have no more trouble from 'Lord Farnford, as he has written to him, though 'politely, peremptorily.'

A weight almoſt too oppreſſive to be borne, was now removed from Conſtance's mind, and ſhe returned to the drawing-room with the letter for Lord Farnford in her hand, and a ſmile on her countenance: ſhe went up to him, and giving it him with a ſlight curteſy, ſaid—From my father, my lord.—From Sir Edward? he replied—pray how came it?—By a ſpecial meſſenger, ſhe anſwered; he brought me letters, and inquired where he ſhould deliver this.—Have I permiſſion to read it? ſaid he.—By all means, Mrs. Stavenell replied, and turning towards the light he opened it.

Amazement was viſible on the countenance of Lady Maria and Lord Calorne; there was however no poſſibility of making what paſſed intelligible to either. Lord Farnford read his letter, and giving Miſs Fitzarthur a look indicative of the utmoſt reſentment, he took up his hat, went out of the room; and pulled the door as hard as poſſible after

him :—What can be the matter with my brother ? ſaid Lady Maria.—Nothing of importance, Conſtance replied in a whiſper :—do not aſk any queſtions now, I will tell you another time :—it is nothing that can alarm you, it will rather pleaſe you. Lady Emma's features ſhewed a ſympathetic diſpleaſure with her brother's, and Mrs. Stavenell, not having all the information ſhe wanted, followed him out. She was abſent ſome time, during which Lady Maria, Lord Calorne and Conſtance converſed on general ſubjects, and Lady Emma ſat ſilent. On Mrs. Stavenell's return, as ſhe paſſed her niece, ſhe ſaid to her,—My lord ſays you ſhall hear from him ;—he's gone away.—Conſtance made no reply ; her ſpirits were raiſed, the evening concluded pleaſantly, and the company ſeparated.

As ſoon as they were gone Mrs. Stavenell deſired to ſee Sir Edward's letter : this her niece produced, but ſaid nothing of her mother's : the reading of it was ſucceeded by the bittereſt reproaches : Conſtance was proud, haughty, ſelf-conceited, obſtinate, every thing that was unamiable ; all this ſhe bore patiently ; and, too grateful for the bleſſings of the evening to retain any animoſity at the hour of reſt, ſhe contented herſelf with replying that her reſolution, however erroneous, was now confirmed, and heartily wiſhed Mrs. Stavenell a good night.

CHAP. XXIII.

SENSIBILITY.

THE next day at noon Lady Emma called on her to take an airing, ſhe was alone in the coach, Lady Maria being indiſpoſed, and when Conſtance came, ordering it to Hyde-park, ſhe began remonſtrating with her on her exceſſive cruelty; but in ſuch a way as could not offend, it being between jeſt and earneſt.—I am ſure, ſhe ſaid, it muſt be a penchant for ſomebody elſe that makes you ſo unkind to my brother: come tell me, continued her ladyſhip, taking Conſtance's hand, and looking very good-naturedly at her, tell me, isn't it Calorne?—indeed I ſhan't be jealous, and I'm poſitive I'm right.—You are miſtaken upon my word Lady Emma, Conſtance anſwered.—That is impoſſible, her ladyſhip returned, while a not-to-be-prevented alteration in her countenance beſpoke her intereſt in the ſubject;—remember the play;—and laſt night I watched his eyes,—I ſaw how exceſſively he was concerned when he heard you weren't well.—I heard the ſuppreſſed ſigh.—Oh, you can't deceive me.—Yet you are deceived, replied Conſtance; were it ſo, I would ingenuouſly tell you;—I have never been backward to own my

friendſhip for Lord Calorne; if you ſuſpect more, you do me and him injuſtice.

The ſubject was near exhauſted, and Lady Emma owned herſelf convinced of her error, when ſhe propoſed, as the weather was tempting, getting out of the carriage to walk: to this Conſtance willingly agreed, and they had not gone a hundred yards before they met Lord Calorne on horſeback: his horſe was not very tractable, and with ſome difficulty he made him ſtand ſtill that he might ſpeak to the two ladies: while they were talking, and when he was off his guard, his horſe flew out and threw him over his head to the ground, where he lay motionleſs. Lady Emma ſcreamed violently, and Conſtance, whoſe ſpirits were yet weak, was ſo ſhocked by the ſuddenneſs of the accident, that ſhe fainted in the arms of a gentleman who had ſtopped on ſeeing the unrulineſs of the horſe. She however ſoon came to herſelf, and was led to the carriage, whither Lord Calorne, who had been only ſtunned by the fall, preſently after followed, with Lady Emma. No aſſurances, that as he was not hurt, he could very ſafely remount, could prevail on her ladyſhip; ſhe inſiſted on his giving his horſe to his ſervant, and going home in the coach: he ſaid he would not be more brave than prudent, and yielded to her compulſive importunity. The ſituation of Miſs Fitzarthur was particularly diſtreſſing: her fainting had rendered the truth of what

ſhe

ſhe had juſt before aſſerted apparently doubtful, and ſhe very well knew the conſtruction that would be put on it by Lady Emma: ſhe did not wiſh that Lord Calorne ſhould hear of it, and hoped, as he did not ſee her, it would be forgotten in Lady Emma's anxiety for him: her hope was vain, her imprudent companion made her inquiries in ſuch terms, as ſuppoſed her having been very ill, and drew his attention.

I am afraid, ſaid Lord Calorne, that I frightened Miſs Fitzarthur.—A little, replied Conſtance, your fall was ſo ſudden, that I was not at all prepared for it.—You call this being a *little* frightened, interrupted Lady Emma: pray what do you call being *much* frightened? He looked at Miſs Fitzarthur, while her unrelenting ladyſhip, neither ſilenced by the confuſion of her countenance, nor aware of the propriety of concealing what had happened, chuſing to divert herſelf at the expence of her friend, and at once to try both her ſincerity and that of Lord Calorne, continued—Why ſhe fainted away the moment you fell.—Really? ſaid he, I do not deſerve ſo much concern, and am more ſorry to have called forth ſuch benevolence and ſenſibility than for the accident itſelf. The vague conſtruction which he, to whom her embarraſſment could not but be viſible, put on it, relieved her diſtreſs, and he ſtudiouſly avoided again mentioning this ſubject; he was ſat down at his houſe in St. James's

Place, and Lady Emma returned with Conſtance to Mrs. Stavenell's.

Here was now a fine field for the raillery both of her aunt and friend: Lady Emma ran open-mouthed to relate the adventure, and it's effect on Conſtance, who was ſoon releaſed by a ſummons to attend her hair-dreſſer. That the conſtruction they put on her fainting was unfair, ſhe was convinced; the ſame effect would, ſhe had no doubt, have been produced by ſeeing any perſon in the ſame perilous ſituation, eſpecially in the then relaxed ſtate of her ſpirits, nevertheleſs, as ſhe knew how induſtriouſly what had paſſed would be reported to Lord Farnford, ſhe was apprehenſive that he would conſider it as a confirmation of what he had before ſuſpected, and might in the heat of reſentment, call on Lord Calorne to anſwer for that, of which ſhe firmly believed him, as well in thought as in word, innocent; yet ſhe hoped the declaration, which the latter certainly would not, in ſuch a caſe, ſcruple to make, if required, that he had never entertained a wiſh that could excite Lord Farnford's jealouſy, would ſet this right: her next fear was, that by what ſhe conſidered as weakneſs, and for which ſhe was heartily angry with herſelf, ſhe ſhould in ſome degree have forfeited Lord Calorne's good opinion; ſhe knew that his notions were correct and ſevere, that he had a high ſenſe of decorum, and was evidently diſpleaſed when he ſaw any woman recede from the dignity

of

of her character; and she thought he might reasonably be disgusted at being informed of that which, if it must have happened, might have been concealed.

She spent the evening from home, and on her return found on her dressing table a letter, which she was told was brought by one of Lord Farnford's servants: it was from him, and as follows:

'Portman-square, 5 P. M.

'Madam,

'I suppose this will find you triumphing in 'your victory, and rejoicing in the felicity of hav-'ing by your inflexible obstinacy made me un-'happy: you have applied to your father, repre-'sented me to him in the colours best suited to 'your purpose, and, repaying the sincerest love with 'the most insolent contempt, have forbidden me to 'entertain the least hope of prevailing on you.

'With the hope, you have kindly taken away 'the wish—I do not despair, but I scorn to entreat 'you farther: if the offer I made to Sir Edward 'could not secure him my advocate; if the passion 'I avowed for you, and which *demanded* a return, 'only increased your natural haughtiness, I should 'be mad to repeat the one, or not immediately 'to dismiss the other. In proportion as I once 'loved you, I resent your conduct; and can now 'very willingly comply with your injunctions to 'be silent. I cannot, however, give up the belief 'that some other prepossession was the cause of

your diſregard of me; it is now incontrovertibly 'confirmed to me, and, though you ſhall have 'credit for ſaying what was true, when you told 'me Calorne had never ſpoken to you on this head, 'I am convinced, and nothing ſhall alter my opi-'nion, that whatever his ſentiments for you may 'be, your's for him are ſuch as I once wiſhed you 'to entertain for me: And may you, for all you 'have made me ſuffer, undergo the torment of ſee-'ing yourſelf ſlighted and deſpiſed by the object 'of your affections.

'You are not the firſt woman I have loved, 'you are the firſt I ever adored, and the firſt that 'ever prevailed on me to harbour ſo ſtrong an in-'tention of marrying: for you I would have re-'nounced every gratification—to you every wiſh, 'every thought ſhould have been directed, but 'you were obdurate: Calorne occupied the whole 'of your mind, and that heart which only hard-'ened at my continued ſufferings, can ceaſe to 'beat at the ſight of him in danger: he is honour-'ed, he is happy, I ſhall not moleſt him; but 'ſincerely wiſh you may find his ſpirit ſo conge-'nial to your's, that he may by diſregard and 'contempt, revenge that with which you have un-'remittingly treated

'FARNFORD.'

The accuſation contained in this angry manifeſto provoked Conſtance, but Lord Farnford's renunciation of his hopes compenſated for it: ſhe was pleaſed

pleaſed to find his reſentment excited, and hoped his advocates would ceaſe their importunity. Mrs. Stavenell, when they met in the morning, ſeemed to have given up the point, and though her diſpleaſure at firſt appeared great, and ſhe bitterly condemned her niece's folly and obſtinacy, Conſtance ſaw this would evaporate, and that ſhe might again be at peace.

Unfortunately in the forenoon Lord Calorne called: Mrs. Stavenell received him: and Conſtance being above ſtairs, was ſent for: ſhe almoſt wiſhed to have avoided him; but, as without incivility ſhe could not, ſhe endeavoured to aſſume an unembarraſſed appearance, and chiding herſelf for a fooliſh awkwardneſs, went down ſtairs, halting at every ſtep to get courage; the longer ſhe heſitated the more ſhe was confuſed, and at laſt ſhe went in. Lord Calorne's back was towards her, and at the moment of her entrance Mrs. Stavenell exclaimed—Good God! my dear what's the matter? has any thing frightened you?—She made no reply, but returned Lord Calorne's inquiry after her health.—Come, ſaid her aunt, here's a gentleman ſo gallant as to come to aſk after you, inſtead of your ſending to know how he did.—I hope, ſaid Conſtance, your lordſhip has not found any ill effects from your fall.—None, I am much obliged to you, he replied, excepting that I am very ſtiff.—I dare ſay, interrupted Mrs. Stavenell, there's not half ſo much in being thrown, as people think

think for; eſpecially when a fair lady ſtands by, and faints away.

The colour roſe in Miſs Fitzarthur's cheeks, and ſhe held down her head to conceal it, when Lord Calorne taking no notice of the latter part of Mrs. Stavenell's ſpeech, anſwered, that as he was thrown, there was nothing very terrible in it.—My eſcape, ſaid he, was however very providential, for, had I been a few feet forwarder, I muſt have, fallen againſt the root of a tree: my obligation to my horſe is very great, for I could not have choſen a better place.—You'll never mount that horſe again, will you? ſaid Mrs. Stavenell.—I have ridden him this morning, he replied, and he really ſeemed conſcious of what he had done yeſterday; notwithſtanding the danger he put me in, I would not part with him for any other in the kingdom nor to be inſured from an accident of that kind all the reſt of my life.—Aye, you red coats, Mrs. Stavenell rejoined, are ſo mighty valiant: I ſuppoſe you'll like the horſe the better for this frolic.—Indeed, ſaid Lord Calorne, it would be unjuſt to lay all the blame on him, for it was in a great meaſure my own fault.—I can't ſay, returned Mrs. Stavenell, that Lady Emma, or my niece are much beholden to him: it was well 'twas no worſe, or I don't know what would have become of Conſtance: ſhe looked as white as my apron when ſhe came home; never ſaw ſuch a figure in my life: I cou'dn't conceive what was the matter,

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till Lady Emma told me:—poor ſoul, ſhe continued, taking her niece's hand, 'twas frightened out of it's wits.—I am more concerned, his lordſhip replied, for the fright I occaſioned the ladies, than for the accident itſelf; and if either of them ſuffers in *any* way, for a degree of ſenſibility which reflects honour on the poſſeſſor, I ſhall have ſtill greater cauſe for regret: to feel for the dangers and misfortunes of others, is one of the moſt amiable traits in the female character, and I am always ſorry to ſee, that thoſe who are ſo endued by nature, ſuffer, beſide the pain of their own feelings, from the raillery of thoſe who have greater ſtrength of mind. Courage, however uſeful and in ſome caſes, neceſſary it may be, was never intended as a feminine virtue, nor do I, in my private opinion, think what it adds to a lady, is equivalent to what it robs her of. This well-timed reproof, delivered with the utmoſt politeneſs, ſilenced Mrs. Stavenell, and reſtored her nieces's natural preſence of mind: he ſoon concluded his viſit, in which he had with all poſſible caution avoided every thing that could add to the diſtreſs which Conſtance's countenance proclaimed, and for which Lord Calorne's ſagacity, ſhe could not doubt had immediately found a cauſe.

The evening of this day had for many weeks been deſtined to a route at Mrs. Stavenell's, to which ſhe had invited all her acquaintance then in town: Lord Farnford came with his ſiſters, and

now

now his reſentment was viſible, he paſſed Miſs Fitzarthur without ſpeaking to, or looking at her, and during the whole of the evening ſtudiouſly forbore every mark of civility: ſhe ſaw the pains he took to be very rude, and was neither offended nor diſpleaſed at it. Lady Maria not chuſing to play, an excuſe to go together into the tea-room afforded Conſtance an opportunity of ſpeaking to her in private: ſhe found that ſhe was informed of what had paſſed reſpecting Lord Farnford, and was aware that their ſo ſeldom meeting was the effect of deſign.—I am conſidered, ſaid Lady Maria, as an enemy to the cauſe, and indeed ſuch I avow myſelf: I ſhould and ſhall always be glad to ſee you, but I can never think of indulging myſelf at the expence of your eaſe. I hope, Conſtance replied, all is now over, and that we may live on the ſame intimate terms as before: Lord Farnford ſeems ſo heartily angry that I have nothing to fear from him.—Do not truſt to his anger, anſwered his ſiſter—however he behaves to you, I aſſure you it is only when you are preſent that he is valiant; at home he is dejected beyond conception; he is eternally complaining of you, and though he reſents your refuſal, I am well convinced that one word of encouragement from you, would make him forget all his anger; and I could, ſhe added, almoſt wiſh—Wiſh what? dear Lady Maria, ſaid Conſtance.—I do not know, ſhe replied, I pity my brother, and I believe he loves you ſo ſincerely

that

that you might do any thing with him; yet I will not plead for him.—No, if you have any regard for me, Miſs Fitzarthur rejoined, do not *you* importune me: I could not refuſe you any thing excepting this, and I will not ſay you could not perſuade me: I am ſure if I yield I am miſerable. —You muſt then avoid him, ſaid Lady Maria, you would not purpoſely give pain to another; and by this neceſſity I fear I muſt loſe much of your company. They were prevented from ſaying any more by the entrance of ſome who had juſt riſen from their cards.

Late in the evening Lord Calorne came; he ſpoke to Mrs. Stavenell, and told her he could not ſtay a quarter of an hour, having called in only to clear himſelf of any imputation of diſrepect in breaking the promiſe he had given her in the morning, which ſome unforeſeen buſineſs had made it difficult to keep. When he was going he ſaid ſomething to Conſtance about Lord Reycolm, and by this means drawing her from the company, he put a letter in her hand, ſaying,—May I beg five minutes attention to this?—She heſitated: her firſt thought was that he might be employed by Lord Farnford, and ſhe replied that ſhe could not take it without knowing it's contents; I truſt ſaid ſhe, Lord Calorne would not be the bearer of a letter of the purport of which he is ignorant; and I hope, that knowing it's contents, he would not, if there was any thing in it that could make

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me uneaſy, offer it to to me.—I thank you, madam, ſaid he, for the confidence you have in me: I will never forfeit it I aſſure you, He then took leave, and went away

CHAP. XXIV.

HONOUR.

IT was late before Miſs Fitzarthur retired to her chamber, and having diſmiſſed her maid, ſhe opened her letter; ſhe looked firſt for the ſignature, which ſeeing to be Lord Calorne's ſhe, not without ſome curioſity to know what he could have to ſay, read it, and found it this:

'Madam,

'A diſcovery, which I accidentally made this 'morning, has convinced me that I have for ſome 'time entertained an opinion equally erroneous 'and injurious to you. Not to keep you in ſuſ-'penſe, I muſt tell you it reſpects Lord Farnford, 'between whom and you, I have been often and 'poſſitively aſſured, the ſame connection was intend-'ed as Lord Reycolm's acquaintance with Made-'moiſelle Rouſſon prevented, I now learn that 'you have ſuffered much from his importunity, 'that he has endeavoured to obtain his purpoſe by means

'means of Sir Edward's authority, and that, in 'conſequence of this you have given him his final 'diſmiſſion.

'Perſonal obligations to Lord Farnford, and a 'conſequent wiſh for his ſucceſs, forbade me at- 'tempting to ſupplant him, and the conſciouſ- 'neſs that it is not in my power to offer you any 'thing equivalent to the advantages of his fortune, 'ought perhaps ſtill to keep me ſilent: yet, as you 'by refuſing him have ſhewn your diſregard to 'pecuniary conſiderations, I know no reaſon that 'can longer oppoſe my declaring myſelf:—you 'have the liberty of refuſing me too; but relying 'on the integrity of my heart, I truſt madam, 'that ſhould this be my misfortune, the attempt 'will not be puniſhed with a loſs of the friend- 'ſhip which began under the auſpices of your 'father, and which, if I do not vainly flatter my- 'ſelf, I have hitherto done nothing to forfeit.

'I will not miſlead your judgment: to ſay I 'have been honoured with your intimate acquaint- 'ance is to ſay I admire and eſteem you; and 'that admiration and eſteem ſhould improve into 'the affection I offer you, is but a natural effect, 'and much leſs wonderful than that I ſhould have 'forced it ſo long to yield to your obligation to 'Lord Reycolm, and the wiſh to promote your 'happineſs hy ſuffering you, had you been ſo in- 'clined to accept Lord Farnford.

'You

'You may probably aſk why I could not as 'well ſay, as write this; I might plead that I 'thought this method would leave you moſt at 'liberty, but ingenioufly I am too much intereſted 'to tell my ſtory verbally: I own that a great 'part of the future worth of my life muſt derive 'its ſource from you, and though I mean to leave 'you to the unbiaſſed determination of your own 'judgment, and will acquieſce in whatever that 'may be, yet ſo deeply am I engaged, that a pe-'remptory refuſal will force me to quit the place 'where you are.

'I will not ſay when I ſhall wait on you, but 'ſhall ſoon do myſelf the honour of aſſuring you 'in perſon, that I am, madam,

'Your moſt obedient, humble ſervant,

'CALORNE.'

The ſurpriſe which Conſtance felt at the peruſal of this letter was genuine: ſhe had till now firmly believed Lord Farnford miſtaken in what he had ſaid of Lord Calorne; but ſhe was forced to confeſs he was right, and perhaps had ſhe interrogated herſelf as to the ſtate of her own mind, however ignorant ſhe had hitherto been, ſhe would have diſcovered that he erred leſs, than ſhe the day before imagined. Whatever eſteem ſhe entertained for Lord Calorne ſhe always conſidered as the involuntary approbation due to merit; and her regard for him being ſuch as ſhe muſt have felt for a deſerving brother, ſhe could hardly recon-

cile

cile herſelf to looking at him in any other light: ſhe could without pain have heard of his marrying any other woman worthy of him, and often wiſhed that Lady Maria were the perſon: this ſhe thought would have been the completion of her happineſs, as ſhe might then have enjoyed the friendſhip of both without reſtraint.

The propoſal did not, however, ſo diametrically croſs her views as to diſpleaſe her: to be eſteemed by a man of underſtanding is certainly gratifying to a ſenſible woman, and to be thought worthy of Lord Calorne's choice, was ſo to Conſtance. But ſeveral reaſons ſoon occured to her, which made her doubt the propriety of encouraging him:— her ſituation was peculiarly unfavourable to him, and the apparent objections increaſing both in number and magnitude, after having thought for about an hour on his letter with pleaſure, ſhe reſolved that to avoid greater evils, it was prudent to refuſe him: the diſcovery hurt her, conſidering it only as a requeſt made by one whom ſhe was ſolicitous to oblige, ſhe felt great reluctance at ſaying what muſt be diſagreeable to him, and above all ſhe feared the loſs of his regard.

She now ſtood in need of an able adviſer, and would have imparted all her difficulties to Lady Maria in hopes of her aſſiſtance, had ſhe not been ſo nearly concerned in her objections; her equal relation to Lord Farnford and Lady Emma, rendered conſulting her on the ſubject improper, as ſhe had

had once ſhewn that her affection for her brother balanced her friendſhip for Conſtance, to decide againſt him muſt be painful, and advice of any other kind it could hardly be expected ſhe would ſo far depart from her former ſentiments and reſolutions, as to give.

The firſt apprehenſion that aroſe in Conſtance's mind, was the danger to which Lord Calorne would be expoſed from Lord Farnford, whom nothing would now convince that a refuſal of him had not the foundation he ſuſpected, and this part of her objection was ſtrengthened by the conſideration that her veracity would become queſtionable. The confidence which Lady Emma had repoſed in her reſpecting Lord Calorne, was another reaſon for refuſing him: though ſhe blamed her forwardneſs, ſhe pitied her, becauſe ſhe thought however injudicious her conduct, her affection was a tribute ſhe was incapable of witholding from his merit, and ſhe charitably believed that her not concealing it was owing to inability to aſſume a diſguiſe: to receive Lord Calorne's addreſſes Conſtance well knew would be to inflict puniſhment on Lady Emma, and it carried the appearance of ſuch a triumph over her as ſhe ſcorned: ſhe did not wiſh he ſhould have Lady Emma, but ſhe could not bear the thought of doing any thing that would occaſion her ſuch ſevere pain; her ladyſhip had manifeſted great kindneſs for Miſs Fitzarthur

arthur, whoſe rectitude of mind taught her, that to repay her thus would be ingratitude.

What ſhe ſhould do after a reſolution ſo formed, was much leſs difficult to determine than how to do it, ſo as to convince without offending Lord Calorne: this was the main point, a whole night's rumination was beſtowed on it in vain, and ſhe was obliged to refer all to the impulſe of the moment when her anſwer ſhould be required, with no other hope than, that as ſhe ſhould probably have ſome days to conſider on it, ſhe might at that time acquire the courage and addreſs, which ſhe could not be ignorant ſhe then moſt lamentably wanted.

This hope ſhe did not long enjoy: Lord Calorne mounted guard at St. James's in the morning, and after the relief called at Mrs. Stavenell's. Unfortunately for Conſtance, and moſt luckily for him, Mrs. Stavenell's fatigue the preceding evening kept her in her chamber; and her niece had juſt ſat down to breakfaſt alone in the parlour. As ſoon as the door was opened ſhe heard Lord Calorne's voice; he aſked firſt for her aunt, and then inquired for her, and being told ſhe was alone, he ſent in to know if he might ſee her: the ſervant delivered his meſſage, and Conſtance, who would have given the world to be relieved from a ſituation in which ſhe feared ſhe ſhould acquit herſelf very awkwardly, deſired he might be ſhewn in.

She

She had ſo far collected herſelf as to receive him with apparent calmneſs, and told the ſervant to ſent up word to Mrs. Stavenell, that Lord Calorne was come.—I beg, ſaid he, that Mrs. Stavenell may not be diſturbed: I only called in to aſk after her and Miſs Fitzarthur, and ſhall be very well ſatisfied with hearing of her.—The man went away to obey Miſs Fitzarthur's directions, and ſhe, dreading a pauſe, began a moſt *intereſting* converſation on the weather, on the buſineſs from which his lordſhip was juſt come, on the engagement of the evening before, and on a variety of ſubjects equally important, which laſted till the meſſenger returned with an excuſe from Mrs. Stavenell.

Lord Calorne and Conſtance ſat down to breakfaſt together, and ſhe ſoon found that her wiſhes and endeavours, to avoid the ſubject on which ſhe was ſo ill prepared to ſpeak, were equally inefficacious: ſhe made the tea, and when they were alone, he ſaid,—If I could have foreſeen ſuch an opportunity as Mrs. Stavenell's keeping her room has afforded me, I ſhould have almoſt wanted an admiſſible excuſe for troubling you with the letter I gave you laſt night: may I aſk if you have opened it?—Shall I put any cream in your tea? ſaid Conſtance.—I will ſave you the trouble, he replied, if you will anſwer my queſtion.—I do not think the water has boiled, ſaid ſhe, riſing to ring the bell.——The tea is very good,

Lord

Lord Calorne anſwered, ſtopping her, and it is a matter of very little importance whether the water has or has not boiled: you do not chuſe madam, to anſwer me; perhaps I am too precipitate: I did not mean to mention it to you ſo ſoon, but I cannot neglect ſuch an opportunity: diſpenſe with form, and tell me, have you read my letter?—This was ſaid too ſeriouſly to be any longer diſregarded. Conſtance, diſtreſſed beyond imagination, coloured like ſcarlet: ſhe taſted her tea, ſhe ſweetned it, filled it up with water, and poured cream into it till it ran over, before ſhe could get courage to articulate a word.—I am afraid, ſaid Lord Calorne, in a tone of raillery, I have ſpoiled your diſh of tea—do not ſweeten it any more; but tell me whether you have found the five minutes leiſure I aſked for my letter.—I have, my lord, anſwered Conſtance, determined to conquer every thing that oppoſed her ſatisfying him: I have read it, and am very ſorry you ever beſtowed a moment's thought on the ſubject of it.—Why, Miſs Fitzarthur? ſaid he.—I have many reaſons for what I ſay, ſhe replied, and to tell you ingenuouſly the truth, my diſinclination to anſwer your queſtion ariſes from the fear that in doing it I ſhall offend you.—He replied, that ſhe had no reaſon for fear of that kind, and deſired to know why ſhe was ſorry.—Becauſe, ſaid ſhe, I ſee inſuperable obſtacles to your views.—Are they inſuperable? he aſked.—They are indeed, returned

Conſtance, and for this reaſon I lament that you ever formed ſuch an intention.—May I hear, ſaid Lord Calorne, what your objections are?—I am ſure you will on this occaſion, as on all others, ſhew yourſelf ſuperior to the world, and will allow me to judge of their force: I am hurt at ſeeing I embarraſs you, but as you have now ſpoken on the ſubject, I beg you to tell me candidly, and without reſerve, what are your *own* ſentiments.—I will indeed, ſhe anſwered, and I truſt when you recollect the ſimplicity in which I have been educated, and how little opportunity I have had of learning to diſguiſe my opinion, you will give what I ſay credit for ſincerity. I acknowledge that I think myſelf honoured by the contents of your lordſhip's letter, and that to make futile objections, or to raiſe imaginary difficulties would be to forfeit all pretenſions to regard: the polite attention with which you have conſulted my eaſe and intereſt deſerves my thanks, and the fear that I appear ungrateful for the friendſhip you have ſhewn me, makes me reluctantly tell you, I can on no account accept your offer. I thank you for your candour, ſaid Lord Calorne, and cannot doubt your informing me on what your objections are founded:—tell me firſt, is Lord Farnford any obſtacle? if I have been miſinformed reſpecting him, I will immediately withdraw my pretenſions.—Your information, ſhe replied is true; finding he could not ſucceed with me, he unhandſoel applied

applied to my father, and forced me very earneſtly to beg that an end might be put to his importunity.

Where then, Lord Calorne aſked, does the difficulty hinge? My chief reaſon, anſwered Conſtance, for declining your offer is, that it is with reſpect to yourſelf improper: Lord Ormington's ſon ſhould expect rank as well as fortune. If this, madam, ſaid he, is your *chief* objection, I proteſt it encourages me. It will not, ſhe replied, if it is underſtood as I mean it: ſurely you ſhould look for, at leaſt *equal* rank: there are many my ſuperiors in that, as well as in other recommendations, to whom this propoſal would, with much more propriety, and a better proſpect of ſucceſs be made. Pray ſaid Lord Calorne, will you favour me by telling me who has been your adviſer in this buſineſs?—No body, I aſſure you, anſwered ſhe; did you think the diſcovery above my ſagacity? No, he returned, but I will tell you honeſtly who I thought had counſeled you. I imagined you had applied to Lady Emma Peryton, and that theſe were *her* ſentiments, for ſhe is very fond of talking in this ſtrain, and ſays much about *equal rank*, with a view I ſuppoſe to remind me of what lady is of equal rank with myſelf:—and now, pray Miſs Fitzarthur tell me, has not what ſhe has often ſaid, ſuggeſted to you this wonderful idea of propriety? No, really, ſaid Conſtance; but I think ſuch an offer made to her, would indeed be more fit.—I will uſe no diſguiſe with you, rejoined his

lordſhip; in this and all other reſpects I will deal frankly with you: I would not make ſuch an offer to Lady Emma Peryton if I were ſure that living ſecluded from ſociety were the conſequence of my refuſing to do it; the woman I marry I muſt eſteem, and of that ſhe has no idea. You ſhall know the hiſtory of my acquaintance with her, and you may then judge how far her rank is likely to attract me. Lord Farnford and I were fellow collegians, and during our ſtay at Oxford, he, by many acts of kindneſs, attached me to him: he introduced me to his ſiſters, and I became intimate in the family as young men who have more ſpirits than prudence frequently are, I was caught, by beauty and vivacity, and while I found my eſteem and reſpect for Lady Maria's fine underſtanding increaſed daily, I was unawares captivated by Lady Emma: an acquaintance of a few months convinced me that a pretty face is no ſubſtitute for good ſenſe, and that vivacity is a thin diſguiſe for folly: I had cautiouſly avoided every thing that could be reaſonably conſtrued into attachment, having juſt wit enough to know, that to recede after a declaration would be cruel and diſhonourable, and I ſoon rejoiced in having done ſo; but immediately as I began to grow palled with the meagre diet of perſonal beauty, Lady Emma completed my emancipation, and what was till then only wearineſs, which a diſcovery of any intellectual attractions would have removed,

moved, ſhe ſuddenly transformed into diſguſt which nothing could eradicate: as I retired ſhe advanced, and I too plainly ſaw the victory was mine before I had formed or intended a ſiege: a conqueſt ſo eaſily obtained, I, perhaps with too much haughtineſs deſpiſed, and abhorring the baſeneſs of deceiving, I by every means ſhort of incivility, declared myſelf. I am very ſorry I have ever occaſioned her any anxiety; it has been often hinted to me, and I believe neither ſhe nor her friends chuſe to underſtand me, however explicit I have been.

The objection with regard to Lady Emma was no longer, after ſo ingenuous a declaration, to be urged; but Conſtance ſtill adhered to the impropriety of his chuſing one his inferior in rank: he told her that he diſregarded this conſideration.

But Lord Ormington will not, ſhe replied. I will do nothing without my father's approbation, ſaid he, I am confident he will immediately ſee the advantages of ſuch a propoſal, and I heartily wiſh the determination were referred to him: let us conſider this point as diſmiſſed, and let me know the other impediments. Our acquaintance is much too ſlight, ſhe anſwered: though it commenced ſome years ago, all that time which ſhould have diſcovered our real diſpoſitions paſſed without our meeting. I will agree, ſaid Lord Calorne, to any time of probation you think neceſſary: we ſhall not know each other leſs, becauſe we may in

future live together—any more objections, Miſs Fitzarthur? Yes, there is another ſhe replied, and a weighty one. He begged to hear it, and promiſed, if it was reaſonable to allow it.—To deal ſincerely with you, ſaid ſhe, I am ſo far in Lady Emma Peryton's confidence that I am ſure ſhe would think my accepting your offer a breach of friendſhip; ſhe would ſay I had betrayed and ſupplanted her, and I could not, though innocent, bear the ſuſpicion.—Nor would I have you bear it, he repl'ed; ſurely we need not offend her, nor is it neceſſary that I ſhould be puniſhed for her gratification:—let what I have ſaid be a ſecret from all here, I aſk nothing more of you than leave to write to Sir Edward after I have heard from my father: neither of them will, if our wiſh that it ſhould not be divulged is mentioned to them, thwart us; and when you return to Marſtonbury I will openly avow myſelf an authoriſed candidate for your favour.

Conſtance's objections were removed: the means Lord Calorne propoſed to avoid giving Lady Emma offence would ſecure him from Lord Farnford's reſentment; he had ever been the object of her eſteem; ſhe knew he ſtood well in the opinion of Sir Edward, and that he had always been a favourite with Lady Barbara; and ſhe felt in herſelf no inclination to refuſe him: neither honour nor prudence required it, and ſhe remained ſilent: ſhe was above all hypocriſy, and when Lord Calorne preſſed for leave to write to her father, ſhe ſaid that on condition

tion of his firſt obtaining Lord Ormington's conſent, and if he would promiſe to refer the matter ſo entirely to him and Sir Edward that, in caſe of their diſapprobation, the ſubject ſhould never be mentioned :—here ſhe pauſed, Lord Calorne aſked no more ; he complied with the terms, ſaid he would write by the next poſt to his father, and that Conſtance ſhould ſee and judge of his anſwer.

This arrangement was juſt made, and the matter fully diſcuſſed when Mrs. Stavenell came in.—For goodneſs ſake, ſhe exclaimed, what at breakfaſt ſtill ?—why its above an hour ago that I heard you was at it :—a fine goſſiping meal truly !—why, my dear Conſtance, you told me the t'other day you never took above a quarter of an hour for your breakfaſt when you was alone.—We have breakfaſted long ago anſwered Lord Calorne :—the ſervant did not come for the tea things, and that is the reaſon we ſeem ſo tedious.—If I had known, continued Mrs. Stavenell as you waſn't neither of you in a hurry, I would have had mine with you.—I ſent to you madam, her niece replied, when Lord Calorne came in.—Yes, my dear, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, I was told he called in to aſk how we did, but I didn't know he had ſo much time to throw away. His Lordſhip now diverted the converſation, and having already ſtaid to the extent of his leiſure, though he could not go, on Mrs. Stavenell's entrance without convincing her his viſit was entirely to Miſs Fitzarthur, took the firſt occaſion to get away.

CHAP. XXV.

ACQUIESCENCE.

THE enſuing week was productive of leſs uneaſineſs to Conſtance than any for ſome time had been, and one circumſtance in it gave her great pleaſure: ſhe had a letter from Lady Recolm informing her of her arrival at Paris, of her mother's being perfectly reconciled to her, and of her complete happineſs: this to one ſo intereſted, was a double gratification, as it by implication aſſured her that her renunciation of Lord Reycolm had been what ſhe intended it, the promotion of his felicity.

Lord Calorne very prudently forbore ſeeing Miſs Fitzarthur; and Lord Farnford's behaviour gave her no uneaſineſs: ſhe frequently met him, and ſaw him addreſs every one in the company excepting herſelf, without feeling the leaſt mortification; at the opera, he would lean acroſs her to ſpeak to Mrs. Stavenell, and if he called at the houſe, he would not enter the room where Conſtance was: but either ſent in his meſſage, or deſired to ſpeak with Mrs. Stavenell: if he dined there, he did not take the leaſt notice of her, and if ſhe called with her aunt on his ſiſters, when he happened to be with them, he left the room almoſt immediately,

ately, and by every poſſible means endeavoured to ſhow how highly he was offended; but Conſtance was not picqued at his rudeneſs, nor willing to relax her ſeverity. On ſuch terms as theſe ſhe could not be a frequent viſitor at his houſe, nor ever a gueſt at his table. Lady Maria ſaw, and ſubmitted to the neceſſity; and Conſtance always took care when Mrs. Stavenell was to dine at Lord Farnford's, either to invite ſome one of her acquaintance to ſpend the day with her or to engage herſelf out.

At the end of the week Lord Ormington's anſwer arrived, and Lord Calorne accidently meeting Miſs Fitzarthur in the mall as he was coming for a chance of ſeeing her alone at Mrs. Stavenell's, ſhewed it to her, it contained a queer kind of wonder that he ſhould aſk his conſent to ſo eligible a match, and it did not expreſs much parental care; but he promiſed compliance with his ſon's requeſt that the matter might not be divulged; and it was an authority for his addreſſing Conſtance.

Lord Calorne then aſked permiſſion to write to Sir Edward Fitzarthur, and having obtained it, after a conteſt, whether waiting till her return to Marſtonbury were not thepre ferable meaſure, he, as if fearing ſhe was not quite reſolved, and might make new objections, engaged her in a converſation reſpecting Lord Farnford, which gave her an opportunity of aſking from whom he had heard of the breach between them; ſhe was ſurpriſed to learn

that it was from Mr. Stavenell, and could ſcarcely think Lord Calorne ſerious till he told her that the information was given him with a view to intereſt him for Lord Farnford, and that the circumſtances were particularly enumerated, that he might by the means uſed, judge of the violence of the paſſion that occaſioned them.

In a few days Conſtance diſcovered that ſhe was not ſo diſintereſted in this buſineſs as ſhe had imagined; ſhe grew anxious for Sir Edward's anſwer, and was obliged to prepare herſelf to receive it, ſuppoſing it could not be what Lord Calorne wiſhed. Her ſuſpenſe was of no long duration, the return of the poſt from Marſtonbury brought her a letter from her father, in which he informed her of Lord Calorne's offer, and deſired to know her ſentiments on it immediately; ſaying, that as he had once been in danger of making her unhappy, he ſhould be particularly cautious in this inſtance; he added, that he deferred writing to Lord Calorne till he heard from her, and that his conduct ſhould be wholly regulated by her wiſhes. At the time when this very affectionate letter arrived, ſhe was going out with Mrs. Stavenell for the evening—the exigency ſuited her; ſhe availed herſelf of the excuſe of a limited time, and ſaid no more in reply, than that ſhe thought, implicit obedience was the leaſt return ſhe could make for his kindneſs, and that whatever her father thought proper, ſhe would very readily acquieſce in.

There

There hardly now remained a doubt of what Sir Edward Fitzarthur would do: he profeſſed himſelf ready to be guided by the inclinations of his daughter, and her referring all to him ſufficiently evinced what they were; the only fear that Conſtance entertained was, that either Mrs. Stavenell or Lord Farnford's family might ſuſpect Lord Calorne; and even this was rendered as light as poſſible by his guarded conduct: he continued his occaſional viſits in Portman-ſquare and Spring-garden, and nothing in his behaviour ever indicated what had paſſed.

Sir Edward anſwered Lord Calorne's letter immediately after the receipt of his daughter's, and at the ſame time, ſent one to her, in which he told her he had given Lord Calorne every encouragement in his power, and that, as Lady Barbara joined him, the whole was referred back again to his dear Conſtance: he expreſſed in forcible terms his approbation of the propoſal, and concurred in the wiſh that the tranſaction might remain a ſecret.

In the evening of the day which brought this letter, Lord Calorne called at Mrs. Stavenell's: Conſtance well knew the purpoſe of his viſit, but there was a large party, and he had no opportunity of ſpeaking to her: he contrived however before he went away to put into her hand Sir Edward's letter, which providing for her being engaged, he had incloſed in this from himſelf:

" Madam

' Leſt I ſhould not have an opportunity of ſeeing ' you alone this evening, I encloſe Sir Edward ' Fitzarthur's letter, which I received by this day's ' poſt: it contains every thing my heart wiſhed, ' and the very generous manner in which he has ' diſpenſed with thoſe circumſtances which I feared ' would oppoſe me, adds to the greateſt obligation ' he could confer on me.

' Is it too much to ſay I now regard you as mine? ' —excuſe my preſumption,—accept my ſincere ' thanks for your very candid and ingenuous con- ' duct, and believe me with the higheſt eſteem and ' affection, Madam,

' Your devoted humble ſervant.

CALORNE.'

The letter incloſed was this.

' My Lord,

' I have deferred acknowledging the honour of ' your letter no longer than till I could learn of ' my daughter, whether I might ſafely follow my ' own inclination, thank you for the offer you have ' made her, and accept it. I have juſt received a ' very laconic epiſtle from her, the brevity of which ' ſays more for you than a folio ſheet could; ſhe ' excuſes herſelf for ſending her acquieſcence in ' whatever I chuſe, by a neceſſity of going out im- ' mediately with her aunt; but had ſhe not *readily* ' acquieſced, I am ſatisfied no engagement would

' have

'have been thought of ſufficient importance, to 'prevent her proteſting againſt your application. 'She will ſay, I have betrayed her to you; but for 'leaving me to draw theſe concluſions, ſurely ſhe 'only is to blame.

'The objections which you ſuppoſe I ſhould 'make to you, are ſuch as to a ſtranger I might 'have made: I ſhould not indeed have choſen a 'ſoldier for my daughter's huſband, yet I could 'not think myſelf juſtified in refuſing Lord Ca-'lorne on that account. With reſpect to the diſ-'proportion of fortune you ſpeak of, that concerns 'her only: if ſhe can be happy with a narrow 'income, I am ſure a large one would not make 'her more ſo.

'To the integrity and morality of your lordſhip's 'character, I want no other teſtimony than the eſ-'teem which ſome, who know you, think your due, 'and my own acquaintance with you: what you 'were, when you favoured us with your company, 'convinced me you would be what you are, and 'I can, with perfect confidence, commit to your 'care, her, in whom my every wiſh centres.

'Lady Barbara bids me expreſs her ſatisfaction, 'ſhe ſays this is an event which ſhe had often, 'thought hopeleſsly wiſhed, and to ſee her daughter 'united to you, is the only deſire ſhe has remaining 'in this world.

'I am

'I am happy in your having Lord Ormington's conſent, and in this occaſion of ſubſcribing myſelf

'Your lordſhip's very humble ſervant,

'EDWARD FITZARTHUR.'

P. S. The time of my daughter's return hither is uncertain: whenever ſhe comes we ſhall hope to ſee you ſoon after.

CHAP. XXVI.

PACIFICATION.

CONSTANCE's mind was now reſtored to its natural tranquillity, and ſhe enjoyed as much happineſs as human life is capable of affording. Lord Farnford played his haughty character upwards of three weeks, and then relaxing, prevailed on Lady Maria to negotiate a peace with Miſs Fitzarthur; he acknowledged his fault in endeavouring to avail himſelf of Sir Edward's authority, and begged her forgiveneſs, with a promiſe that notwithſtanding his love for her muſt ever remain undiminiſhed, it ſhould be productive of no uneaſineſs to her: he owned he deſpaired of ſucceſs, but ſaid he could with pleaſure renounce all

all his hopes to obtain her good opinion: that the ſtudy of his life ſhould be to deſerve it, and that, when he forfeited it, he would not accuſe her either of injuſtice or ſeverity, but ſubmit to her diſpleaſure.

As Lady Maria ſeemed ſatisfied of the ſincerity of theſe profeſſions, Conſtance, whoſe temper was not formed for reſentment, accepted the apology, and promiſed forgiveneſs and oblivion. Mrs. Stavenell ſaw this reconciliation with pleaſure, and her niece lived on the ſame terms with Lord Farnford's family as before Lord Reycolm's return: ſhe, however, ſtill kept all that had paſſed with Lord Calorne profoundly ſecret, not ſo much from the fear of irritating his humiliated rival, as from kindneſs to Lady Emma, whoſe affection for her ſeemed every day to increaſe, and to whoſe peace of mind ſhe could not bear to give ſuch a wound, as this defeat of her fond hopes would prove. Lord Calorne's regard to Miſs Fitzarthur's eaſe took away all neceſſity of revealing it, he never paid more attention to her than to every other lady in company, and nothing, they both flattered themſelves, could excite ſuſpicion; he never hazarded writing to her after Sir Edward's conſent was obtained, nor did any perſon know of his application excepting the three conſulted: he had given Conſtance his picture, but ſhe was ſo cautious that ſhe would not even riſque carrying it about her.

Two

Two months ſhe lived in this pleaſant way; ſhe had every thing that could render her happy, and the proſpect before her was of permanent felicity: beloved by one who ſo juſtly merited her regard, eſteemed by her acquaintance, with no wiſh ungratified, no pleaſure which ſhe was capable of enjoying, out of her reach; ſupported by conſcious innocence and integrity, and thankful for having eſcaped the evils and miſeries which had threatened her, ſhe felt no concern, excepting that which ſenſibility occaſionally excited, produced: ſhe had every thing to hope, and nothing to fear. But the ſcene was ſoon to change; ſhe had reached the top of the pinnacle; ſhe ſaw happineſs before her, the full enjoyment of which is, for the wiſeſt reaſons, denied to mortality, and ſhe muſt now deſcend and bid adieu to the tranquillity of mind, without which, pleaſure loſes its charms; with which, even misfortune is tolerable.

A very great alteration ſuddenly appeared in Lord Calorne; his ſpirits were dejected, and ſomething ſeemed to oppreſs his mind: the diſcovery was ſoon made by her, ſo much intereſted in it, and ſhe began to ſuſpect he repented what he had done, yet nothing in his behaviour to her implied it, nor was it to be inferred from any circumſtance that might not have ariſen from indiſpoſition: unwilling therefore to harbour an idea which impeached either his honour or his judgment, and which ſo warred againſt her own peace, ſhe reſolved to baniſh the ſuſpicion and to ſeek, by other means, to account for

for that which grew every day more obvious, and attracted the notice of ſeveral of his acquaintance.

He now embraced every opportunity of ſeeing her alone, and on ſuch occaſions his ſpirits would ſometimes riſe to their natural pitch; ſtill, however, that ſomething gave him uneaſineſs, was evident, and Conſtance imagined it muſt be ſome event in his family: ſhe enquired after Lord Ormington, and learnt that he was arrived in town, and in good health; nothing appeared in that quarter that could cauſe this wonderful change: his ſiſter ſhe did not dare to name, as he had never mentioned her, and as this was the only point inacceſſible to her curioſity, ſhe ſuppoſed it was ſomething reſpecting her: a few days made her doubt the validity of her conjecture, and fear that ſhe herſelf was the cauſe ſhe ſought; he grew impatient for the time of her return to Marſtonbury, and heard with apparent vexation that Mrs. Stavenell did not purpoſe leaving London till the latter end of July, by which time ſhe expected her ſon would be at home, and that till then, Conſtance could not with propriety leave her, as her viſit was to continue from her quitting the country for the winter, till ſhe returned to it for the ſummer.

She ſometimes hinted to Lord Calorne, the alteration obſervable in him, he generally diverted the diſcourſe, or, if he thought fit to anſwer her, it was in ſuch a way as tended to confirm her ſuſpicions that all was not right; at laſt he acknowledged that

that he was not in perfect health, that he had loſt his appetite, and could not ſleep, and put her off by ſaying, that if he was not ſoon better he would conſult his phyſician.

One evening, a large party, which included Lord Farnford and his ſiſters, Lord Calorne, and many other young people, met at Mrs. Stavenell's to go with her and her niece to Ranelagh; they went, and had been there about an hour, when Lord Calorne complained of a pain in his head, and took his leave, ſaying he would go home; ſoon after, Conſtance and her party, who imagined him gone, met him:—what ſaid Lord Farnford not gone yet Calorne? I hope you have changed your mind, and that your head-ach is better.—He replied no, that his carriage was not there.—Then take mine ſaid Lord Farnford; I ordered my men to wait, for I did'nt know how long I ſhould ſtay, I am ſure it is within call—take it and ſend it back. Lord Calorne ſaid he would, and again went away—and again they met him.—Lord Farnford aſked what new diſappointment?—the company anſwered he, are coming in very faſt; I will take another turn with you, and then perhaps the door will be leſs crouded; he went on with them for a few yards, when ſomebody having trodden on Miſs Fitzarthur's train and torn it, ſhe ſtopped to get one of the ladies in company to pin it, and for this purpoſe, and that ſhe might not be in the way, ſhe retired out of the vortex, towards the boxes.

Lord

Lord Calorne who had ſtaid with her, ſeeing this opportunity, put a letter unobſerved by any one elſe, into her hand, and immediately went out of the rotunda.

The felicity of the evening had been completely ſpoiled by his indiſpoſition, and now ſhe heartily wiſhed herſelf at home to know the contents of his letter, which from his myſterious behaviour ſhe hoped would develope the ſecret ſhe could not penetrate. It was near three in the morning before ſhe could gratify her curioſity, and was then obliged to ſend her maid out of the room on ſome frivolous errand, or ſhe muſt have kept her letter unopened till ſhe roſe. She impatiently, and ye fearfully broke the ſeal, and read theſe words:

'My dear Madam,

'Every effort I have made to tell you what it is 'now my intention to reveal, has failed, and I am 'driven to the neceſſity of writing to you:—— 'you ſay you cannot leave town till Mrs. Stave- 'nell goes, and that will be perhaps towards the 'latter end of July. This is a long while for me 'to wait—a long while for chance or accident to 'reign.—I have a propoſal to make to you, which 'would diſpel in a great meaſure the gloom that 'hangs over me, and which is occaſioned by a fear 'I cannot overcome, that by ſome misfortune or 'other I may loſe you: if I could be certain that it 'would not offend you, I ſhould without heſitation 'diſcloſe my wiſh: but remember I ſubmit it to your

'your judgement, and that, however it may bring
'mine in queſtion, it is in itſelf innocent.

'Sir Edward Fitzarthur's conſent, and that of
'my father, you know have been without any diffi-
'culty obtained; and I am allowed to hope that a
'ſhort time, after your return home, will make you
'mine: a thouſand things may yet intervene, and
'fruſtrate my expectations: I muſt endeaovur to
'prevail on you, to put it out of the power of acci-
'dent to do me this irreparable miſchief.

'If you cannot quit London before Mrs Stave-
'nell does, would you ſo far indulge me, and re-
'lieve my apprehenſions, as to admit of an imme-
'diate private marriage?---Is there not ſome one
'friend in whom you could confide, and at whoſe
'houſe I might ſome evening meet you?---One
'hour is all I aſk: ſurely you can ſteal that from
'your engagements. Give me your conſent---
'name the perſon, and I will take the whole upon
'myſelf. I am ſure I might ſafely truſt Mr.
'Metward, my father's chaplain; he is too much
'attached to me either to refuſe or betray me, and
'he, my dear Miſs Fitzarthur, ſhall put an end to
'my anxiety.

'But this muſt be revealed to none but thoſe on
'whom our ſucceſs depends: neither your father
'nor mine muſt know it---we ſhall have no occaſion
'ever to ſay any thing of it; it will be no impe-
'diment to our formal marriage ſome months hence,
'and it would render me inexpreſſibly happy.

'I know

'I know you will firſt ſtart at the propoſition: 'an hours conſideration, will convince you it is 'neither criminal, nor imprudent. Should you 'even think it right, after our avowed marriage to 'mention it to Sir Edward, I cannot believe he 'would blame it: he would ſee the motive to it, 'and would make allowances for my apprehenſions:

'Let me beg you to think, and to think *favour-* 'ably of it: I am not ſuperſtitious, but I have ſome 'ſtrange preſentiment about me, that unleſs we 'are thus immediately united, ſome fatal accident 'will ſeparate us: this foreboding, your good ſenſe 'may deſpiſe: I own it weakneſs, but it is a weak- 'neſs I cannot conquer: when I face it, it flies 'me: yet it returns, ſleeping and waking, with re- 'doubled force, and I can think of no way by 'which I can procure reſt, excepting this which I 'propoſe to you.

'For the chance of ſeeing you alone, I will call 'at Mrs. Stavenell's to-morrow about your break- 'faſt hour; if ſhe is with you, my viſit will be 'only a compliment to enquire after her and you: --if this obſtacle is not in our way, I ſhall hope 'you will declare yourſelf ready thus innocently to 'gratify

'Your obliged, and very obedient
CALORNE.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

Resolution.

THE extraordinary requeſt contained in this letter alarmed Conſtance: what could be Lord Calorne's reaſon for making it?---it was on the face of it diſhonourable, and it was occaſioned only by the fears he had deſcribed; his weakneſs was ridiculous: his prophecy was verified that the propoſal would ſtartle her, but not that an hour's conſideration would make her think well of it; it had baniſhed all inclination to ſleep and ſhe pondered it inceſſantly to morning; not that ſo much time was neceſſary to frame her determination, which was immediately taken and adhered to, but her inability to account, in any ſatisfactory way, for what was ſo repugnant to her notions of honour, and ſo contrary to the principles on which ſhe thought Lord Calorne acted, perplexed and diſturbed her. A ſuſpicion aroſe in her mind that he was jealous of her, notwithſtanding ſhe had in the whole of her conduct conſidered herſelf as accountable to him, and rendered ſtill more careful by a very ſincere affection for him, been ſuſpiciouſly anxious to avoid giving him uneaſineſs; motives of prudence, and a natural deſire to ſhun evil, now aided the dictates of honour and ſtrengthened a reſo-

a reſolution before inflexible, to refuſe him. She wiſhed as much as he could, that Mrs. Stavenell might be abſent when he came, for her reſentment was excited, and ſhe was deſirous to repreſs his expectation as ſoon as poſſible.

They were gratified, Mrs. Stavenell on account of her late return from Ranelagh, kept her chamber till noon; and about ten Lord Calorne came: Miſs Fitzarthur not being in the parlour, was called; ſhe immediately went down: the ghaſtlineſs of his countenance ſtruck her, he was pale, his eyes ſunk, and his whole perſon beſpoke extreme indiſpoſition: after having anſwered his queries reſpecting his getting home, ſhe ſaid, ſhe hoped his quitting Ranelagh had cured his head-ach. ---No, ſaid he, it has been growing worſe every hour: I fooliſhly took laudanum laſt night; and inſtead of making me ſleep, it has kept me in horrors not to be deſcribed. This in ſome meaſure accounted for his looks; and Conſtance fearing any miſconſtruction of her ſilence, began on the ſubject of the letter:---ſhe aſked him what had ſo lowered his opinion of her, as to ſuggeſt a belief that ſhe would comply with his wiſh ----ſurely ſaid ſhe Lord Calorne, you do not know what you have aſked.---I know very well he replied, what I have aſked, and I know that my reaſons for it are ſuch as will ſupport me; and I truſt if you will diſpaſſionately re-conſider it, every objection will vaniſh.---And can your lordſhip think, ſaid Conſtance

that I will consider a proposal in itself so dishonourable, and which is an infringement of my father's authority? could I return to his house, and expect and receive those instances of his kindness, which are the rewards of obedience, at a time when I had dispossessed him of his power over me? suppose any thing were to happen to make it necessary for him to retract the consent he has given, and circumstances might occur, to which even *you* might think it proper to submit; how must he blame me and I reproach myself for such inexcusable precipitation! I beg you will think no more of it, for I cannot.

Lord Calorne seemed bent on succeeding in his scheme, urging repeatedly, his fear that some unforeseen accident might separate them: he found Miss Fitzarthur immoveable; and not a little irritated at his making and persisting in so improper a request, the result of a pusillanimous dread of he himself knew not what; she replied to all he could say, that she never would consent to it, and that if the punishment of her obstinacy were to be their never meeting again, she would rather undergo it than the reproaches of her conscience.

The point was at length given up; breakfast was brought in, and Lord Calorne promised never again to mention the subject: he told her he honoured her firm adherence to what she thought right, though he might perhaps have cause to lament it: she considering his fears as a part of, or

at

at leaſt occaſioned by his preſent indiſpoſition, ſaid all ſhe could to encourage him: ſhe remarked to him how far ſhort of his wiſhes her compliance in this particular would reach; that it would only be to ſecure to themſelves an alloy of every felicity, and how much better it was to truſt to the diſpenſations of that providence whoſe protection they might be aſſured of while they rejected any irregular methods of obtaining his bleſſings, and whoſe care by the contrary they muſt inevitably forfeit. All ſhe urged had little effect on Lord Calorne's ſpirits; he yielded becauſe ſhe was reſolute, but he did not appear convinced: he talked of the ſlenderneſs of the tie which held them, and how eaſily it was broken, when ſhe, interrupting him ſaid—Now I know the cauſe of your uneaſineſs, my lord; I ſuſpected it and it is confirmed.—The lividneſs of his countenance was for a moment changed to ſcarlet, and he haſtily aſked her what ſhe ſuſpected.—You cannot truſt me, ſhe replied.—Not truſt you? he repeated; explain yourſelf, what do you mean by my not truſting you? If what I ſaid, anſwered Conſtance warmly, needs any explanation, it ſhall have it: you are jealous of me or you would not talk of the ſlenderneſs of the tie between us; you are unſatisfied with my conduct, and have no confidence in me.—Lord Calorne for ſome moments ſat ſilent looking ſteadfaſtly at her, and then ſaid—If there is any one human failing which I am without, I can I think lay my hand

on my heart and conſcientiouſly ſay it is jealouſy; how can you ſuſpect me of it? or if you can ſuſpect me, how can you imagine me jealous with reſpect to you, who have ſo uniformly convinced me that you are above all caprice, and ſcorned that pleaſure, which ſo many of your ſex value, of obtaining adulation by the mean arts of coquetry: ſo far I proteſt am I from being or having cauſe to be jealous of you, that I have often wondered how you could avoid the particular civilities offered you by others; I have felt grateful for the diſtinction, while I feared you would involve yourſelf in difficulties, and would have abated a little of the perfect ſecurity and repoſe I enjoyed, leſt your ſcrupulous regard to it ſhould make your ſituation embarraſſing.—My ſuſpicion may be unjuſt, Conſtance replied, but, ſaid ſhe ſmiling, if I did not hope that this diſeaſe of your mind, whatever it is, is removeable, I ſhould be almoſt afraid to have any thing more to ſay to you:—are you ſubject to low ſpirited fits?—No, indeed, he anſwered, I never before felt any oppreſſion like this that now hangs on me:—I will exert myſelf againſt it; it is weakneſs I own, and as ſuch reprehenſible: do not think that by ſeeing me as I am now you are gaining knowledge of my character, this is no part of it I aſſure you.—I will believe it, replied Conſtance, and I will attribute it wholly to ill-health. I really pity you, and would as far as is conſiſtent with duty and propriety, relieve you.—You are

very

very good, said Lord Calorne, will you allow me to take advantage of your disposition? will you ratify your father's consent by your own promise? at present I have only your tacid acquiescence.—I do not understand you, she answered; the constant tenor of my actions, has, I think, been a sufficient ratification of what my father has done.—May I say, returned his lordship, that I have your promise.—You make me cautious, she replied, I am fearful of being betrayed to say more than I mean:—God forbid, interrupted he, that I should impose on you: I only wish to have it to say that we each rely on the word of the other. I am certain that a mind like your's will think itself as much obliged by a verbal contract unwitnessed, as a written one executed with the proper forms; all I ask is an assurance from you that you will accept me for your husband, and consent to be my wife.—As far as I have power, said Miss Fitzarthur, I engage myself to you.—And I, continued he, solemnly promise in the sight of God, conscious that he both hears me and knows the sincerity of my heart, that no earthly consideration shall prevail on me to give you up, but that with your consent, I will marry you.

Lord Calorne now seemed satisfied,: and Constance ventured to ask him what particular accidents they were which his present low state of spirits made him fear; when they were interrupted by the sudden bursting open of the room door, and the

immediate entrance of Lady Emma Peryton.—Miſs Fitzarthur's ſurpriſe was not to be concealed, nor her apprehenſions repreſſed that her ladyſhip had liſtened to their converſation; yet, as nothing in her appearance betrayed it, and ſhe was in high good humour, it was no more than a poſſibility.—Now, ſaid ſhe, darting into the middle of the room, I have caught you: the ſtreet door was open, and I was determined to make you jump; ſo I wou'dn't ſend in my name; but, continued her ladyſhip, aſſuming an air of reſerve between jeſt and earneſt, I did not know who was with you, or I wou'dn't have done ſo.—Conſtance very readily forgave the intruſion, and as Lady Emma had always a large portion of goſſiping time, Lord Calorne took his leave, apparently vexed at her mal-a-propos viſit.

The gloom on his mind was, when they next met, a little diſpelled; and there was reaſon to hope it was gradually wearing off: ſhe ſaw with pleaſure that he ſtrove againſt it, and therefore forbore gratifying her curioſity by repeating the queſtion to which Lady Emma's unexpected entrance had prevented his anſwering: that he was not ſo chearful as he had been, gave her occaſional uneaſineſs, though ſhe flattered herſelf a reſtoration of his health, which mended very ſlowly, would entirely remove his dejection.

CHAP

CHAP. XXVIII.

COMMUNICATION.

ONE evening when Mrs. Stavenell was engaged from home, and when Lord Farnford, his ſiſters, Lord Calorne, and ſome other young friends, were with Miſs Fitzarthur at tea in the drawing-room, a meſſage was brought to her from a lady, who waited in the parlour, and wiſhed to ſpeak with her; ſhe deſired ſhe might be ſhewn up ſtairs. —The lady wants to ſee you in private, ma'am, was the anſwer. Conſtance could not gueſs who could have any private buſineſs with her; the ſervant ſaid he did not know the lady, that ſhe had a little child with her, and came without a ſervant in a hackney coach. She ſent down word that ſhe would wait on the ſtranger in a few minutes; and getting Lady Maria Peryton to take her place at the tea-table, ſhe went, with no ſmall degree of curioſity, to the parlour; the lady, who had riſen on her entrance, was a perſon ſhe could not recollect ever having ſeen; ſhe looked like a woman of faſhion, was in a very elegant undreſs, the beauty of her face, though under a large bonnet, could not paſs unnoticed, and ſhe had with her a little boy, who appeared to be between two and three years old.

Conſtance addreſſed her, and deſired to know her buſineſs with her.—You are Miſs Fitzarthur, I preſume, replied the ſtranger—I have a favour to aſk of you, madam, which ——— here ſhe ſtopped, and ſeemed much embarraſſed. Conſtance begged her to compoſe herſelf, and ſaid ſhe would attend to any requeſt ſhe had to make.—She again attempted to proceed;—I am informed, madam, that you are ſhortly——here ſhe heſitated, grew more agitated, and burſt into tears. Conſtance was all aſtoniſhment, and could not conceive what ſort of diſtreſs excited ſuch emotions:—She endeavoured to encourage her, and offered to ring for a glaſs of hartſhorn and water; this the lady declined, ſaying, ſhe ſhould recover in a few minutes. To avoid diſtreſſing her, Miſs Fitzarthur now directed her attention to the child, whoſe countenance prejudiced her in its favour, and he returned her careſſes with fondneſs; in a ſhort time ſhe was relieved from her ſuſpence, the lady recovered the free uſe of her tongue, and ſaid,—You are very good, madam, to take notice of my little boy; it is on his account and his ſiſter's that I trouble you; it is for them that I aſk a favour of you.—I underſtand that you are ſhortly to be married to Lord Calorne.—Conſtance was thunderſtruck; but recovering from her ſurprize, ſhe, with ſome heſitation, aſſured her her information was premature; ſhe would have proceeded, had not the ſtranger interrupted her by ſaying,—Although my

my information may be *premature*, madam, it is not *erroneous*, it is ſufficient for me that ſuch a match is in contemplation, and this I am ſure you will own——Here ſhe ſtopped as if expecting Conſtance's aſſent, but ſhe, too much embarraſſed to ſay a word, only coloured. I ſee, madam, continued the lady, I have diſpleaſed you by the abruptneſs of my application; I am very ſorry for it, for I had no intention of offending you; that I may not detain you, I will tell you my buſineſs as briefly as poſſible. I heard by accident a ſhort time ago, that my lord had thoughts of marrying, and on inquiry, I found you were the lady he addreſſed; at the ſame time ſuch a character of you was given me as encouraged me to aſk you to plead the cauſe of two helpleſs infants; this child, madam, is lord Calorne's,—and I—O how can I look at you and own it!—I am its unhappy mother.

At this information Miſs Fitzarthur trembled univerſally, and was ſilent, till ſummoning her fortitude and her preſence of mind to diſguiſe her intereſt in it, ſhe ſaid that lord Calorne could not then be at liberty to marry. O madam, replied the ſtranger, I ſhould be very ſorry to prevent his marriage;—he is quite at liberty. I never wiſhed him to remain ſingle on my account, for he has aſſured me he never will abandon me.—This Conſtance conſidered as little ſhort of an inſult; it was plainly telling her ſhe was to *ſhare* Lord Ca-

lorne's affection; and she was in doubt whether she should not decline hearing the remainder of this story; yet there appeared in the relator, such an artless simplicity, such a fear of offending, and such distress, that she could not resolve on dismissing her without knowing if it was in her power to serve her.—What I have to request of you, madam, said the stranger, is, that when you are married you would represent to my lord the propriety of making a permanent provision for his children, for I have a girl younger than this child: this I am not so anxious for; his sex makes a provision less necessary; but for my girl something should be done, for indeed, madam, ill as you may conceive of me, it would break my heart to have her exposed to the temptations her mother yielded to: if she is secure from poverty, I hope she will be safe: as for myself I have nothing to ask; my lord's generosity has placed me above all fear of want, and I do not doubt he will be as kind to his children; but my anxiety makes me very earnestly wish for a certain provision for them: will you, madam, now you have been so good as to hear me, will you take the trouble of mentioning my request to my lord as soon as you can after you are married?

The whole of Miss Fitzarthur's resentment was now awakened against Lord Calorne, and his urgency for a private marriage was explained. This was in her opinion so infamous a connection as entirely

entirely to forbid all farther intercouſe with him; the reſpect ſhe had entertained for him now vaniſhed, and was ſucceeded by abhorrence of his libertiniſm, and anger at his attempt to impoſe on her by the appearance of ſtrict morality: ſhe replied with ſome warmth—Were I capable of marrying Lord Calorne after what I have heard of him, I ſhould deſerve and expect all the contempt he could treat me with:—In that caſe, however, I would moſt willingly remind him of his duty to his children, but I conſider him as already married: in the ſight of Heaven he certainly is ſo; I will never rob another of their right, nor can I content myſelf with his lordſhip's ſuperfluous affection.—I muſt then beg, ſaid the ſtranger lady, that if you break with my lord, he may not know of my application; he would never forgive my being the occaſion of loſing you.

A pauſe now brought to Miſs Fitzarthur's recollection that ſhe was giving implicit faith to aſſertions which, however bold, might be falſe, as ſhe knew not what credit was due to her informer; ſhe, however, promiſed that the confidence ſhe repoſed in her ſhould not be rendered injurious to her, and expreſſed her aſtoniſhment that ſhe had been ſo deceived in Lord Calorne.—O madam, ſaid the lady, with a half ſmile, you know but little of the world, or you would not think ſo badly of my lord; indeed when firſt I lived with him I uſed to call him very wicked to have enticed me

from home, becauſe it broke my poor mother's heart; for I aſſure you till I knew Lord Calorne, though I was poor, I was reſpected.—The arts, replied Conſtance, which he muſt have uſed to inſnare you add to his wickedneſs: I can make allowances for young women where their ſituations in life expoſe them to the arts of thoſe whoſe powers of temptation can be extended to any difficulty they meet with, and they are ſincerely to be pitied—how long have you known Lord Calorne? —I knew him firſt, ſaid the ſtranger, a ſhort time before he went abroad—this child was born while he was gone; he wanted to perſuade me to come to him, but my mother was living, and as I was with her, ſhe hoped our connection would be broken.

It appeared very incredible to Conſtance that Lord Calorne's character ſhould be ſo ill underſtood, conſidering he had ſo early diſcovered his inclinations; all his acquaintance regarded him as an uncommonly good young man, and that he ſhould be able to deceive the world effectually, while ſuch corrections of their judgment as his children exiſted, was to her matter of ſo great aſtoniſhment as induced her to believe herſelf impoſed on by this relation: unwilling, however, to appear intereſted by aſking ſuch queſtions as might either remove or confirm her ſuſpicions, ſhe ſaid that if ſhe found Lord Calorne the man he was repreſented, her acquaintance with him would immediately ceaſe; and

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ſhe muſt therefore decline all interference in his family affairs.

The ſtranger perceiving ſhe had witheld her belief, and ſeeming piqued at her incredulity, replied—Do you ſay, madam, if Lord Calorne is the man repreſented? do you doubt what I have told you? you do, and I cannot wonder at it. The loſs of credit is but the conſequence of the loſs of innocence, though indeed I am not the abandoned creature you think me: if you could ſpare me half an hour I would convince you I erred from weakneſs not inclination. Conſtance, though ſhe could very ill ſtay, could not forbear wiſhing to know what degree of credid was to be given to imputations which ſo nearly concerned her: ſhe therefore ſent to the company above ſtairs an excuſe for her abſence, and a requeſt to Lady Maria to ſupply her place till her return; and then liſtened to ſuch a ſeries of deceit and villany exerciſed to intrap a poor unwary girl as called forth equally her pity and her anger.

When the lady had ended her ſtory, Conſtance, who felt much intereſted for her, expreſſed her abhorrence of Lord Calorne's conduct, and acknowledged her confidence in him was ſhaken: ſtill, however, unwilling to condemn him, ſhe ſaid ſhe would inquire of ſome of his friends, leſt there ſhould be any miſtake in names or circumſtances; and if, continued ſhe, I find, what I can hardly doubt you have told me confirmed, will

you give me leave to excuſe the neceſſary alteration in my behaviour, by owning I have ſeen you?—No, replied the lady, I cannot conſent to it; he would never pardon it: I can, I believe ſpare you the trouble of inquiry, for I have a letter in my pocket from him: you know his hand I ſuppoſe.—Conſtance anſwering in the affirmative, ſhe took out a number of letters, one of which ſhe gave her to read, and it contained theſe words:

'I own, my dear Maria your reproaches are 'juſt, the letter you refer to is three weeks old, 'and yet unanſwered; but I will not admit the 'inference you draw from my neglect:—let the en-'cloſed be a peace offering, and reſt aſſured you 'are as dear as ever to

Your moſt faithful and affectionate

CALORNE.

'P. S. Kiſs your little boy for me.—Metward 'ſays he grows very much like me:—a little tell-'tale! but I love him and his mother too well to be 'diſpleaſed at the diſcovery. I have long ſurmount-'ed vulgar prejudices, and care little for the opi-'nion of the world.'

So abſolute a confirmation left no room either to hope or doubt: the letter was ſigned, and the whole of it written by Lord Calorne, and addreſſed to Miſs Greyburne: Miſs Fitzarthur now looking at the child, fancied ſhe ſaw the mentioned reſemblance; and borne down by ſuch a torrent of evidence ſhe was loſt in amazement. The lady took her leave,

and

and Conſtance ſummoned all her fortitude to return to the company: as ſhe was going into the hall, ſhe ſaw a letter lying on the floor, which ſhe picked up, and finding it to be that which Miſs Greyburne had ſhewn her, as it was impoſſible to return it, put it into her pocket and went to the drawing room. When the door was opened, Lady Emma coming up to her, exclaimed—Lord my dear, where have you been this age?—I aſſure you if I hadn't heard it was a lady that wanted you I ſhould have thought you'd been gone off: I was juſt coming to ſee after you:—why my dear you look very pale—what's been the matter?—who have you had with you?—come tell me, for I am dying with curioſity.

The quick ſucceſſion of Lady Emma's queſtions took away all neceſſity of anſwering them; and Conſtance ſaid only that ſhe was not very well, and ſat down on the neareſt chair. One of the ladies was at the harpſichord, and ſeveral of the company were ſtanding round her, but all were now either alarmed for Miſs Fitzarthur, or anxious to know what was the matter: they therefore quitted the harpſichord and came to her. Lady Maria thinking the heat of room was too great, ſaid, ſhe would be better in the air, and deſired one of the ſaſhes might be opened: this was immediately done by Lord Farnford, and Lord Calorne offered to move her to the window: the ſight of him, who was the

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ſole cauſe of her indiſpoſition, reanimated her; ſhe declined his aſſiſtance, and went towards the air, where ſhe preſently recovered. Some reaſon muſt now be aſſigned both for her ſtay and her diſorder: the true one was of all the moſt improper; ſhe therefore ſaid, that the perſon to whom ſhe had been called had been telling her a very melancholy ſtory.—A widow and half a dozen fatherleſs children, with a tale made up to draw the money out of your pocket, I conclude, interrupted Lord Farnford.—Well! ſaid Lady Emma, I'm ſurpriſed how people can pleaſe themſelves with hearing melancholy tales; when any body comes to me with a pitiful ſtory I always deſire 'em to hold their tongues, for I've no idea of making one ſelf miſerable for misfortunes one don't feel.—Lord Calorne ſmiled at her ladyſhip contemptuouſly, and ſaid to Miſs Fitzarthur—I hope the diſtreſs you have honoured with your compaſſion was ſuch as you could alleviate, then I am ſure you will rejoice in having ſuffered by hearing it.

Conſtance, who an hour before would have liſtened eagerly to Lord Calorne, and whoſe eyes would have declared how ſincerely ſhe concurred in every wiſh for the happineſs of others, now turning from him, anſwered coldly:—From what I have hear'd I could derive no pleaſure, nor no advantage, excepting that of learning to diſtruſt, not only all the world, but my own ſenſes. This anſwer was too myſterious to gratify the curioſity

of

of her hearers: Lord Farnford, who from the miſt in which the object was enveloped, exaggerated its magnitude, after a pauſe coming from the fire to Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid—I will lay five to nothing I gueſs what ſort of a viſitor you have had.—There is ſomething, replied Lord Calorne, interrupting him, ſo very unfair in attempting to extort what another is deſirous to conceal, that, were I Miſs Fitzarthur, however ſecure I might be of your gueſſing wrong, I would not allow you to exerciſe your ingenuity.—Conſtance fearing Lord Farnford ſhould ſay any thing that might again diſorder her, and ſcarcely able to recollect what ſhe herſelf had ſaid, anſwered, that a recital of misfortunes could not afford pleaſure, nor did ſhe think them ſubjects of converſation.—Lady Maria agreed with her: Lady Emma ſaid, there were things enough to make us uneaſy in this world without our ſeeking for them: and here, as curioſity was out of hope of being gratified, inquiry ceaſed.

CHAP. XXIX.

DETERMINATION.

AS ſoon as the company were gone, Conſtance retired to her chamber, too much occupied by what ſhe had learned to wiſh to meet her aunt, and

and desirous to avoid inquiries which she could not so easily have parried as those she had been teased with: she passed a sleepless night in comparing the several circumstances of Lord Calorne's behaviour to her, with Miss Greyburne's story, and the correspondence between them tended to confirm that which was already too certain: the fear that this connection should come to her knowledge accounted in some measure for his dejection, and fully explained his proposing a clandestine marriage; a snare which she most heartily rejoiced at having escaped. One thing only was inexplicable; that all his acquaintance should either be ignorant of his character, or join to conceal it: this staggered her, for had Lady Maria known it, she would not have been so lavish in her commendations of him; had Lord Farnford known it, the wish, while he suspected her attachment to him as the cause of her refusal, to lower him in her opinion, and his desire to convince her that he himself was not a prodigy of immorality, would she was certain, have overcome every consideration of friendship or charity: she therefore could only conjecture that this was a secret, and that Lord Calorne had successfully imposed on the world. In proportion as her regard for him was sincere, she was grieved at his depravity, and her indignation was roused at his consummate hypocrisy. We are never more angry than when we find ourselves duped, natural justifiable pride, and self love, aid better reasons, and

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we can ſooner forgive any injury than that of deceit.

What ſtep ſhe ſhould take in conſequence of this diſcovery, in her preſent agitated ſtate of mind ſhe could not reſolve: there was but one thing on which ſhe would immediately decide, and that was never to be the wife of ſuch a man. In the morning ſhe moſt unwillingly obeyed a ſummons to the breakfaſt table, where ſhe found Mrs. Stavenell, who on her entrance expreſſed her concern and aſtoniſhment at the alteration in her looks.—Do I look worſe than uſual? ſaid Conſtance, going to the glaſs—yes I do, I look pale, but it will go off. —You went to bed ſoon laſt night, replied her aunt, your maid ſaid you ſeemed poorly.—I was very low in the evening, anſwered Miſs Fitzarthur, hardly knowing how to get rid of theſe troubleſome inquiries.—I believe the room was too hot. —If you ar'n't well, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, I'll ſend for advice; I ſhall have you laid up elſe.—Her niece begged her not, aſſuring her ſhe was quite recovered, and they ſat down to breakfaſt: a diſh of tea was all Conſtance could ſwallow: and Mrs. Stavenell inſiſted on her being worſe than ſhe owned, and propoſed ſending for her phyſician, which, however, her niece prevented by ſaying—I know what I ſhould be told—that I muſt leave off raking, for that late hours, and ſudden tranſitions from heat to cold will ruin any conſtitution: if you pleaſe, ſhe continued, I will be good and keep houſe

houſe this evening, and I ſhall be quite well to-morrow.

At noon Lord Farnford called to inquire after her, and preſently after Lord Calorne: Conſtance could not avoid appearing, and was comforted by Lord Farnford's preſence, which had ever been a reſtraint, as well on Lord Calorne as on herſelf: it was impoſſible to behave with eaſe: her colour went and came, and her diſorder was viſible: ſhe was leaſt reſerved and embarraſſed to him ſhe had uniformly diſliked; more ſo to him who till the preceding day had been the object of her eſteem. Lord Calorne's countenance plainly indicated his perceiving this change, it expreſſed a reſentment of it, and when he had ſatisfied himſelf about her health, and made ſome fruitleſs efforts to engage her in converſation, which ſhe laconically repelled, he withdrew. She felt relieved by his abſence. and dreading nothing ſo much as again exciting Mrs. Stavenell's ſuſpicions, ſhe joined her in a requeſt to Lord Farnford that he would go with them to Chriſtie's: his lordſhip, not a little elated by this unprecedented mark of favour, willingly acceded to this propoſition. Mrs. Stavenell was engaged abroad for the evening, and out of kindneſs to her niece, who purpoſed ſtaying at home, ſhe aſked Lord Farnford if his ſiſters would come and ſit with her: he undertook for them that they ſhould, and ſaid he would accompany

accompany them; a civility which Conſtance would very readily have diſpenſed with: ſhe could not decline it, and therefore ſtrengthened her aunt's invitation by telling him, that if the ladies would come they would practiſe ſome muſic which had that morning been ſent to her: ſhe hoped this employment would divert their attention from her, and ſupply her deficiency in converſation.

Notwithſtanding Miſs Fitzarthur was well aware of the propriety of immediately informing Sir Edward and her mother of the diſcovery ſhe had made, it was a meaſure to which ſhe had ſo many objections that ſhe could not reſolve on it: it would oblige her to give up her author, and this the fear of involving Miſs Greyburn in difficulties forbade; Sir Edward would without doubt inform Lord Calorne of the reaſons which forced him to depart from his promiſe, and perhaps ſhe might be required to confront him; beſides the idea of being made the ſubject of converſation, as he would be no longer ſolicitous to keep what had paſſed ſecret, and might through reſentment and revenge expoſe her, was too diſagreeable to be riſqued. In order therefore, to avoid this and the pain of verbally accuſing him, a taſk which though ſhe abhorred his vices, ſhe ſtill had too much regard for him to think herſelf adequate to, and to ſcreen Miſs Greyburne from the effects of his anger, ſhe determined to keep what ſhe had heard within her own breaſt, to avoid ſeeing Lord Calorne, to leave London as ſoon as

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ſhe could find a pretext for it; and, when at Marſtonbury, to acquaint Sir Edward and Lady Barbara with his conduct.

A habit early imbibed of ſacrificing every inclination to the ſenſe of rectitude enabled her to make this heroic reſolution, but it was not ſufficient to ſupport her under it: the diſappointment ſhe had experienced preyed inceſſantly on her ſpirits, and notwithſtanding the utmoſt exertion of her fortitude it viſibly impaired her health: ſhe had, without effect, hinted to Mrs. Stavenell her wiſh to return to the country; her aunt was not to be perſuaded that it would be of ſervice to her, and would not hear of it: the fear of marring her project by preſſing it too far made her cautious; when it was violently oppoſed, ſhe deſiſted; but always renewed the ſubject at the next opportunity. A week ſhe dragged on in this uncomfortable way, without any other conſolation than that ſhe did not ſee Lord Calorne: his uncommon long abſence from Mrs. Stavenell's, and her not having met him in that time any where, made her ſuſpect he knew the diſcovery ſhe had made, and had withdrawn himſelf; but this ſhe found it difficult to believe: ſometimes ſhe perſuaded herſelf ſhe had been impoſed on by Miſs Greybourne's ſtory; but his letter to her was incontrovertable evidence: ſhe was forced to abandon every hope, and to acknowledge, that however ill ſhe had thought of Lord Farnford, Lord

Calorne

Calorne was not only his equal in vice, but his ſuperior in hypocriſy.

That ſhe might not render her taſk more difficult than it really was, ſhe avoided every occaſion of indulging the melancholy which already nearly overpowered her: ſhe gave up the pleaſure of ſolitude, and forced herſelf to dreſs and go into company, when neither her ſpirits nor ſtrength were equal to the fatigue: the ſociety of Lady Maria Peryton was now too much like remaining alone; ſhe preferred Lady Emma's vivacity, as that for a moment made her forget what ſhe was too prone to think on; but theſe apoſtrophies afforded her no permanent relief, every painful remembrance returned as ſoon as ſhe was alone with added ſtrength.

She had promiſed one evening when ſhe had met Lady Emma at the opera, to be ready at noon the next day to walk with her: they went together to the reſervoir in the Green Park, and were by the water ſide when her ladyſhip ſuddenly ſtopping, and looking at her watch, recollected an engagement ſhe had made to call on a lady in Clarges-ſtreet at that hour: ſhe ſaid ſhe ſhould not be gone ten minutes, and wiſhed Conſtance to wait where ſhe then was for her. As each had a ſervant with her, there was no impropriety in this, and Miſs Fitzarthur agreed to walk there till ſhe returned: in a few minutes, as Conſtance was indulging the privilege of being alone, and ruminating on the arguments

arguments ſhe ſhould next uſe to prevail on Mrs. Stavenell, ſhe heard the gate from the Queen's-walk fall to, and lifting up her eyes ſaw Lord Calorne who had juſt aſcended the hill, accompanied by Mr. Metward his father's chaplain, whom ſhe had once before ſeen, and who was the perſon propoſed by him, as he could truſt, to perform the ceremony of their clandeſtine marriage:—ſhe involuntarily ſtopt, and would have gone out at the neareſt gate, had it not been for her expectation of Lady Emma: ſhe therefore only turned back, and hoped Lord Calorne and his companion would go through to Piccadilly: in this ſhe was deceived, they followed her, and when come up with her, Lord Calorne ſaid,—Good morning to you, Madam—what here alone?—She returned his ſalutation as briefly as poſſible, and anſwered that ſhe waited for Lady Emma who had juſt left her.—Lord Calorne pauſed, and then, looking full at her, ſaid,—I am very ſorry to ſee Miſs Fitzarthur here without company;—touched his hat, paſſed her, and went towards the grove.

It was upwards of half an hour before Lady Emma came back, and Conſtance had time for reflection on the alteration in Lord Calorne's behaviour, and the manner in which he had ſpoken to her: it was ſo different from his uſual mode of addreſs, and he ſo emphatically ſaid he was ſorry to ſee her there without company, that ſhe was at a loſs to underſtand him. As ſhe again paſſed the gate

through

through which he went, ſhe ſaw him and Mr. Metward walking very cloſely, and Lord Calorne looked back every four or five ſteps: what the myſtery of his conduct meant ſhe could not find out. It was evident that ſomething had wrought a great change in him; at any other time he would have joined her, now, notwithſtanding he profeſſed himſelf ſorry to ſee her alone, he quitted her: ſhe was for a moment hurt at the ſlight, but when ſhe conſidered that a breach between them was neceſſary and inevitable, ſhe endeavoured to reconcile herſelf to it, and again to perſuade herſelf that it was the conſequence of his knowing the diſcovery Miſs Greyburne had made.

When Lady Emma returned ſhe aſked Conſtance if ſhe had had no company: ſhe replied that ſhe had not, that Lord Calorne had paſſed her, and had ſcarcely ſtopped: her ladyſhip ſeemed ſurpriſed, and ſo unwilling to believe that he had ſtaid no longer, as convinced Conſtance ſhe ſuſpected a greater intimacy between them than was avowed; but hearing that Mr. Metward was with him, ſhe ſeemed ſatisfied.

CHAP. XXX.

SUPPOSITION.

SOME young friends of Miſs Fitzarthur's had invited her to ſpend the next evening with them in Pall-mall; there was a large company, and when the card-players were ſeated, Conſtance, the young ladies of the houſe, and ſome others went towards the windows, which were yet open: they had ſtood a few minutes when their attention was drawn by a light in the ſtreet: it was a chariot with a flambeau, and, as ſoon as it came in ſight, one of the ladies of the family ſaid,—Here's this ſmart chariot that comes every day: I wonder whoſe it is.—It now ſtopt at the oppoſite houſe, and Conſtance plainly ſaw it was Lord Calorne's: he got out of it and went into the drawing-room, the window ſhutters of which were alſo open: there was only one lady ſitting in the room, and ſhe was reading till the carriage came; ſhe then had laid by her book, and when Lord Calorne entered received him with much ſeeming joy: the curtains were immediately let down, and no more was to be ſeen. The curioſity of Conſtance had been ſo excited, and ſhe was ſo wholly engroſſed by what ſhe ſaw, that ſhe remained ſilent; but now, as the ladies were ſtill converſing on the ſubject of this unknown chariot

chariot, and ſaying how often it came, and that the lady they had ſeen had the frequent uſe of it, ſhe told them whoſe it was, and aſked who lived at the houſe.—That replied the young lady, I cannot find out: it ſeems to be a ſort of ſecret, and I have a great notion it is a kept miſtreſs: the houſe is ready furniſhed, and this lady has been there about ten days; ſhe is a very pretty woman; they ſay her name is Graham, or ſomething like it, and would perſuade us that her huſband is in the country; this chariot comes every day, and very often the gentleman who got out of it comes on foot, dreſt in regimentals; at other times it is ſent, and the lady goes out with her child. From this account it was no unjuſtifiable ſurmiſe that the Lady was Miſs Greyburne, and Conſtance could ſcarcely conceal her intereſt in what ſhe had ſeen.

The young lady who had firſt ſtarted the queſtion now ſaid to another at a card-table near her,—Miſs Fitzarthur knows whoſe carriage that is that I ſhewed you this morning;—ſhe ſays it is Lord Calorne's.—What, returned the lady, Lord Ormington's ſon?—why that's he that's going to be married.—Conſtance was ready to die at this information; ſhe retired to a chair behind her, and prepared to hear news of herſelf.—And who is he going to be married to? ſaid the curious impertinent.—Who played that diamond?—the ſpade was your's—the trump was mine—were the only anſwers ſhe could for ſome time get: at length a deal interpoſed, ſhe repeated

her queſtion, and the lady anſwered :—He is going to have Miſs Ecklew.—Why I thought, replied the inquirer, ſhe was to have had Colonel Derville. —Yes, ſo it was imagined, the other anſwered, but it is not to be ſo: they ſay the match is concluded on between Lord Ormington and Mr. Ecklew.—I'm ſure I pity her from my heart, for I know ſhe dos'nt like Lord Calorne, at leaſt ſhe likes her colonel much better :—I ſaw her this morning, and ſhe told me if her father inſiſted on it, it would break her heart.—But ſurely ſaid a gentleman at the table, if Lord Calorne was aware of this he would refuſe her.—Not he, I dare ſay, replied Miſs Ecklew's friend :—I ſuppoſe he has a mind to her fortune, which was left her by her aunt on condition ſhe marries to pleaſe her father, and is very well worth his having : it is ſaid to be in order to avoid paying a conſiderable gaming debt due to Mr. Ecklew, whoſe eſtate being like Lord Ormington's a little out at elbows, makes him clamorous, that this match was propoſed.

All the particulars of this buſineſs were communicated, the hearers were ſatisfied, and Conſtance ſecretly rejoiced in their miſinformation. But it preſently occurred to her that what ſhe had heard might be true, and this might account for the oddity of Lord Calorne's behaviour : the authority on which the lady ſpoke was indiſputable, as ſhe aſſerted having her information from Miſs Ecklew herſelf, and as Lord Calorne had in one inſtance attempted

attempted impoſition, it was not impoſſible that he might in another effectually deceive her. This imagination wrought ſo forcibly on her mind that it was with the utmoſt difficulty ſhe kept up any tolerable degree of chearfulneſs through the evening: when ſhe got home, ſhe reſolved, at all events, the next day to mention ſeriouſly to Mrs. Stavenell her deſire to return to Marſtonbury: ſhe did ſo, urging as a reaſon for it the decline of her health; and obtained a promiſe from her that if ſhe was not ſoon better, ſhe would not oppoſe her following her inclinations.

Lady Emma Peryton had engaged Miſs Fitzarthur to breakfaſt with her and Lady Maria the next morning, and, it being very fine weather, ſhe was to walk, as was her uſual cuſtom when ſhe went to Portman-ſquare, through Hyde-park, and Mrs. Stavenell ſaid, ſhe would either call or ſend the coach for her. As ſoon as Conſtance had croſſed the road in Hyde-park, ſhe ſaw Lord Calorne coming ſlowly down the Walnut-tree-walk; he ſtopped and then went off to the left: as he was at a conſiderable diſtance, ſhe hoped ſhe ſhould be able to avoid him by turning out of the track: but when ſhe had gone a few yards farther, he came up to her, and with a ſtern voice and countenance aſked her why ſhe came there:—ſhe was diſconcerted by ſeeing him, ſurprized at his queſtion, and ſtill more at the manner in which it was put; ſhe anſwered it by repeating it, and ſaying ſhe was going

to Portman-ſquare.—And why, Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid he, would you come this way?—you do not, ſurely, ſee your danger.—What danger? returned ſhe terrified:—I am ſorry I came this way if it is dangerous.—Did I not tell you, ſaid he, I honoured your firmneſs?—what will your father think?—he little knew what he did when he ſuffered you to come to London:—he had better have immured you all your life where you were;—but it makes very little difference,—nothing would have been a reſtraint:—I ſhall ſay no more to you:—you have made me miſerable,—leave this place I beg;—do not ſtay in it.—What would I not give I had been diſappointed!—go out of the park as faſt as you can.—For heaven's ſake, ſaid Conſtance, what do you mean?—what danger am I expoſed to?—what have I to fear?—you have terrified me ſo I ſcarcely know which way to take—if you will walk to Piccadilly with me I will ſend the man immediately to call a coach.—*I* walk back with you? replied Lord Calorne—this is confirmation:—Miſs Fitzarthur, I reſpect your family—I love you—and I have not loſt all ſenſe of honour. Saying theſe myſterious words, with a look ſtill more calculated to embarraſs, he left her, and ſtruck acroſs towards Kenſington-garden.

Half dead with fear and ſurprize Conſtance knew not whether to return or proceed: her ſervant had waited at a diſtance while Lord Calorne ſpoke to her, and ſeeing her now ſtand ſtill, he came up to her

her: ſhe went forward, and nothing appearing to excite her apprehenſions, and many people being diſperſed about the park, a few moments conſideration inclined her rather to think his lordſhip out of his ſenſes than that there could in ſuch a place be any danger from which her ſervant was not a protection; ſhe therefore continued her walk, and reached Portman-ſquare without any reaſon to credit the unintelligible warning.

When ſhe went in at Lord Farnford's, her countenance declared that ſomething uncommon had diſturbed her: ſhe aſked to have a little water, and then related as much of her rencontre as ſhe thought prudent. Lady Maria was equally at a loſs, and as much aſtoniſhed as herſelf. Lady Emma laughed at it, and ſaid Lord Calorne had a mind to frighten her: Lord Farnford, who came in ſoon after her, and to whom the circumſtances of the affair were by his younger ſiſter, repeated, inſiſted on it that Lord Calorne was either drunk or mad; the latter Conſtance was inclined to believe, the former ſhe thought as improbable as Lady Emma's ſuggeſtion that it was done to frighten her. In the courſe of converſation on the ſubject, the alteration in Lord Calorne's behaviour, and the dejection of his ſpirits were obſerved on; and Lord Farnford, in a way between jeſt and earneſt, ſaid,—I would lay a thouſand to one that I can account for this oddity.—How? ſaid Lady Emma—Calorne's in love, replied his lordſhip: Miſs Fitzarthur do

you know no lady of whom he is moſt paſſionately fond, though neither he nor ſhe chuſe to own it? —The queſtion ſo diſconcerted her to whom it was addreſſed and who ſaw how it was aimed, that ſhe could very ill diſſemble; but lady Emma cruelly preſſing her to anſwer, ſhe replied that ſhe had heard that he was paying his court to Miſs Ecklew. And pray, ſaid Lord Farnford, riſing and placing himſelf directly before her, do *you* believe it?—I had it from what I thought good authority; but I told my informer I ſhould give no credit to it, till I had aſked you; becauſe you were ſo much intereſted in it, and it would occaſion ſuch an alteration in the arrangement of your affairs, that you muſt, if it were true, know of it.—Never had Conſtance ſuffered any thing equal to what ſhe felt now.—Lady Maria ſaw and would have relieved her diſtreſs, had not Lady Emma repeated her brother's queſtion:—determined, by her obſtinate perſeverance that ſhe ſhould not have the victory, ſhe exerted herſelf, and replied that ſhe believed the report as much as ſhe believed others in general of that kind, though it might be true for aught ſhe knew, and that from the poſitive manner in which it was aſſerted, it could hardly be doubted.—The looks of Lady Emma and her brother convinced Miſs Fitzarthur they were no ſtrangers to Lord Calorne's attachment to her, and having reaſon to ſuſpect his honour, ſhe concluded he had broken his word, and diſcloſed what ſhe wiſhed to conceal: elſe

elſe how ſhould Miſs Greyburne, how ſhould Lord Farnford's family know ſo much.

Unhappy in herſelf, miſerable in ſolitude, and yet ſcarce able to bear the fatigue of company, Conſtance heartily repented having made the engagement at Lord Farnford's, and reſolved never again to ſeek an alleviation of her melancholy in a remedy ſtill worſe than the diſeaſe. That ſhe had loſt all her vivacity had been for ſome time obſerved by her acquaintance, and Lord Farnford joined by his younger ſiſter, moſt unmercifully rallied her for it, attributing it avowedly to Lord Calorne, and telling her that however cunning ſhe might be, ſhe could not blind all the world. At laſt Mrs. Stavenell called her, and Conſtance whoſe deſire to return to Marſtonbury increaſed every hour, quitted Lord Farnford's houſe, with a determination to pay only one other viſit there, and that it ſhould be for the purpoſe of taking a farewell.

Amidſt all her vexations ſhe could not but think herſelf fortunate in being free from Lord Calorne's viſits: an interview which ſhould oblige her to converſe with him, would, ſhe frequently thought, be more than ſhe could endure. For ſome days after Miſs Greyburne had been with her, ſhe was in perpetual fear of his coming, or meeting him where ſhe went; but excepting the morning when he called to inquire after her, and her ſeeing him twice when ſhe walked, her fortitude had eſcaped a trial of this ſort, and her dread ceaſed to exiſt. She

could not doubt his having diſcovered that his character was developed, nor that for this cauſe he avoided her; but his conduct ſeemed always intended to defeat her ſagacity, and to puzzle her: She had juſt returned from Lord Farnford's, and was alone in the drawing-room, when the well-known knock at the door alarmed her: ſhe looked out, ſaw Lord Calorne, and immediately ran to the top of the ſtairs to ſtop the ſervant who ſhould let him in: the impulſe which ſhe at the inſtant obeyed, was that of avoiding him; but having a few moments to deliberate, ſhe ſcorned the idea of excuſing herſelf to him, or the cuſtomary falſhood of ſaying ſhe was out: ſhe meant him to know it was to *him* ſhe was not at home, and therefore told the footman to ſay, if ſhe was inquired for, that ſhe had given orders to be denied. Notwithſtanding ſhe wiſhed to be out of hearing of his voice, ſhe had not power to ſtir from the place where ſhe was: ſhe heard herſelf aſked for:—ſhe heard her anſwer given, and Lord Calorne ſay in reply,—I am ſure Miſs Fitzarthur is at home:—the ſervant ſaid it was true, but that ſhe had ordered him to deny her.—Are you to deny her to every one? ſaid Lord Calorne.—I don't know, my Lord, anſwered the man, Miſs Fitzarthur, when your lordſhip knocked, told me to deny her. Lord Calorne ſaid no more, and went away; while Conſtance, who had not imagined ſo much would be ſaid, almoſt repented having authorized ſuch rudeneſs to him:

a little

a little recollection nevertheleſs convinced her that if ſhe had erred it was on the ſafe ſide, and that any wiſh to keep terms with him who had broken all with her, could ariſe only from a weak partiality of which ſhe ought to be aſhamed.

CHAP. XXXI.

OFFICIOUSNESS.

IN the evening Mrs. Stavenell and her niece were without company, a circumſtance which afforded a favourable opportunity of repeating her wiſh to leave London: ſhe told Mrs. Stavenell ſhe was ſure while ſhe ſtaid in town her health would not mend, for if her indiſpoſition was the conſequence of a different manner of living, nothing was ſo likely to reſtore her as returning to the life ſhe had quitted: her aunt heard her patiently, and when ſhe pauſed in expectation of a reply, looking at her with a ſarcaſtic ſmile, ſaid,—Pray, my dear, is Lord Calorne a going out of town?—I do not know, Madam, replied Conſtance reddening, why ſhould you aſk me?—I know nothing of his intentions.—Nay, returned Mrs. Stavenell, don't be angry; I thought as that might be the reaſon of

your wiſhing to leave me. Still more diſtreſſed and confuſed, ſhe anſwered that Lord Calorne's conduct could not poſſibly biaſs hers.—I beg your pardon, ſaid Mrs. Stavenell, I didn't know if he mightn't viſit again at Marſtonbury; but I durſt to ſay when he's told as you're there, he'll come, if it's only for the ſake of ſeeing the houſe, you know.—Conſtance, heartily vexed, ſat ſilent, while her aunt continuing her ſtyle of raillery, ſaid,—Why, my dear, do you think nobody ever ſee Lord Calorne was in love with you? or do you ſuppoſe we all thought as you hated him?—Indeed, Madam, Conſtance confuſedly anſwered, you are miſtaken if you imagine—I will not deny—O, interrupted Mrs. Stavenell, I don't mean to aſk any more queſtions:—if you've a mind to be ſo much upon the reſerve, well and good;—you ſhall have my free leave and licence:—I don't intend to interfere, only take care of yourſelf; if you don't chuſe to take advice you'll have nobody to blame but yourſelf, for I think when its come to ſuch a propoſal, its too late to give advice.—Seeing the effect what ſhe ſaid had on Conſtance, ſhe added—I'm ſorry I diſtreſt you, for you ſeem to me to be vaſtly confounded.

It was now beyond a doubt certain that Lord Calorne's intentions were diſcloſed, and Conſtance had no means left to defend herſelf from a charge of great imprudence and diſingenuity, except that of relating the whole tranſaction; as it was her requeſt

requeſt that it ſhould be a ſecret, ſhe was at liberty to reveal it; it was at this moment neceſſary, and with tolerable firmneſs ſhe began by ſaying,—Whatever, Madam, you may think, I aſſure you —Here Mrs. Stavenell interrupted her, by telling her that ſhe needed none of her aſſurances; that as ſhe had hitherto been ſo cautious ſhe might ſtill be ſo; and that ſhe deſired ſhe would, as it would be very diſagreeable to her to be made a party in the affair.—After ſuch a repulſe, had it been a topic Conſtance wiſhed to converſe on, it was impoſſible to proceed: ſhe therefore reverted to that of the return home, and in expreſs terms requeſted that ſhe might be permitted to write that night to her mother.—To this Mrs Stavenell did not appear very averſe, only bidding her conſider how ſhe would go, and adviſing her to deſire Sir Edward to ſend ſomebody up to fetch her. Had ſhe yielded to this, it would have occaſioned a delay of ſeveral days; ſhe therefore ſaid ſhe wiſhed to ſet out as ſoon as ſhe could, and that if her aunt would ſpare the maid-ſervant who had waited on her, to accompany her, ſhe could go very ſafely in poſt-chaiſes. Mrs. Stavenell ſaid ſhe might do as ſhe liked, and Conſtance determined to write immediately, and to leave London in three days at fartheſt.

She was going out of the room to put in execution what ſhe had propoſed, when at the ſtair-head ſhe met Lord Farnford: ſuch an abrupt en-

trance was too familiar with him to ſurprize her; he ſtopt her, and led her back: vexed at being thus diſagreeably detained, ſhe made many efforts to get away; but Mrs. Stavenell ſaying ſhe would have time enough to write before the poſt went out, ſhe was obliged to ſit down and join in the converſation.—Do you know, my lord, ſaid her aunt, that Conſtance is going to run away from us?—ſhe's reſolved, and I can't prevent it.—What hemiſphere, replied his lordſhip ridiculouſly, does Miſs Fitzarthur purpoſe illuminating? it will be a Lapland winter with us till ſhe returns.—Were your lordſhip's queſtion, ſaid ſhe, ſtripped of its poetical ornaments, it might I ſuppoſe be anſwered by my ſaying I am going home.—My dear Madam, returned Lord Farnford, from your gravity, I ſhould, had I not been better informed, have concluded that your journey was not perfectly your own choice;—but tell me how can you be ſo cruel as to leave us juſt when London is in its meridian glory.—I leave town, ſaid Conſtance, in hopes of better health in the country.—Better health! his lordſhip repeated, why town is the only place for young ladies to be well in:—you are running away from advice:—why you will die with moping in the country.—Rather, anſwered ſhe, I ſhall recover by it, for I am now wholly unfit to partake of any of the amuſements in London.—Well, ſaid Lord Farnford, if it is reſolved on, and for your advantage, it ought not to be oppoſed;

poſed :—pray when do you go ?—As ſoon as I can, Conſtance replied, the day is not yet fixed.—After a pauſe of ſome ſeconds, he aſked her how ſhe went, and whether ſhe waited for any body to fetch her, or purpoſed travelling alone.

Mrs. Stavenell told him what her niece's ſcheme was, and added that ſhe wiſhed he could prevail on her to wait for better company.—Lord Farnford again was ſilent for ſome moments, and then ſaid ; —Though I have found ſmall encouragement to attempt prevailing on Miſs Fitzarthur, I was juſt thinking of a plan which appears to me preferable to her's :—I intend ſetting out for the country myſelf to-morrow, and as it is not above a morning's ride from my houſe to Marſtonbury, if Miſs Fitzarthur would for once ſo far honour me as to truſt me, I would undertake to conduct her ſafe home. —Mrs. Stavenell appeared to like the propoſal, but Conſtance immediately, with thanks for the intended kindneſs, rejected it ; ſhe ſaid ſhe could not poſſibly get ready for ſuch a journey by the next day, nor could ſhe think of going without preparing Sir Edward and Lady Barbara for ſeeing her.—The firſt objection was rendered of no force by Mrs. Stavenell undertaking that ſhe ſhould be ready ; the other Lord Farnford ſurmounted, by promiſing to ſend a ſervant before them to Marſtonbury ; but Conſtance who had better reaſons than theſe for refuſing, was reſolute in declining the civility : ſhe knew well to what ſolicitations ſhe might be expoſed

poſed when opportunity ſo favoured him, and had been too often irritated by his preſumption, to be beholden to him for his protection.—I ſee, ſaid he, Miſs Fitzarthur's reaſon for objecting to my propoſal ſhe imagines that, without her, I ſhould travel alone, and ſhe has no confidence in me: ſhe can ſurely have no fears when I tell her my ſiſters will go with me: we ſhall be three only, and they will I am certain be very happy in having her company.—Mrs. Stavenell now juſtly obſerved that ſuch an opportunity was not to be neglected becauſe it might hurry her a little; and her niece ſatisfied of her ſecurity while in the preſence of Lady Maria Peryton, no longer refuſed it: preliminaries were immediately ſettled, Lord Farnford's carriage was to call her, and ſhe turned her thoughts wholly to preparing for her departure.

CHAP. XXXII.

CROSS PURPOSES.

THE indiſpoſition of the human mind to be ſatisfied is never more obſerveable than when we have gained that which we regarded whilſt out of our

our reach, as the ſummit of our wiſhes: elevation extends our proſpect, and, if any thing before us appears deſirable, we immediately purſue it: if we are obliged to confeſs we have nothing more to wiſh for, we imbitter our happineſs by reflecting that the ſituation we have quitted had advantages wanting to that we have attained. From this weakneſs of humanity Conſtance was not exempt: in the morning ſhe had looked forward to her return to Marſtonbury as the ſure and only means of removing the oppreſſion of her mind, and reſtoring her native tranquillity; and, now that her wiſh was nearly accompliſhed, ſhe could not think of leaving Mrs. Stavenell's houſe, and bidding adieu to the many pleaſures ſhe had enjoyed there, without regret: this, which ſhe thought childiſh folly, ſhe combated by conſidering herſelf as incapable of any longer deriving pleaſure from thoſe objects which had occaſioned it, and by the hope of again enjoying that felicity which ſhe imagined inſeparable from a reſidence at her father's; there was however one circumſtance which no proſpect of advantage to herſelf could enable her to think on with any degree of complacence; the moment was at hand when ſhe muſt, if ſhe meant to live in tolerable peace, tear from her heart all regard for, and all remembrance of Lord Calorne: ſhe was on the point of quitting him for ever, and in ſuch a ſeparation ſhe found little to conſole her, except the approbation of her conſcience—a conſolation which

which we cannot wonder ſhe then thought inadequate to her neceſſity of ſupport. She paſſed the night in the moſt tumultuous perturbation, ſometimes endeavouring to ſtrengthen her mind by reflecting on the propriety of the reſolution ſhe had taken, and at others ſinking with dread leſt ſhe had too lightly ſuſpected him: of this indeed there appeared very little reaſon to be apprehenſive, what ſhe had learned of Lord Calorne was too well atteſted to admit the ſhadow of a doubt; and, ſuppoſing the ſtory of his intended marriage were falſe, yet any one circumſtance that Miſs Greyburne had communicated was ſufficient to criminate him: at length wearied with weighing poſſibility againſt probability, and hoping, that, whatever were the iſſue, her intentions would juſtify her, ſhe determined ſteadily to perſevere, and was much comforted in thinking, that the ſpace between her concluding on her journey and the time for putting it in execution was ſo ſhort as entirely to ſecure her from any neceſſity of herſelf bidding Lord Calorne a laſt farewell.

Before ſhe left her chamber in the morning, the following note was brought to her:

'Miſs Greyburne preſents her moſt reſpectful 'compliments to Miſs Fitzarthur, and begs ſhe 'will not trouble herſelf to mention to Lord Ca-'lorne the buſineſs on which ſhe had the honour 'of converſing with her about a fortnight ago, as

'ſhe

'ſhe learn't laſt night his lordſhip is ſhortly to be 'married to Miſs Ecklew.'

She now heartily rejoiced in her having been acquainted with this manœuvre of Lord Calorne's before, as the ſhock was much leſſened: ſhe felt it however; it renewed in her mind ſenſations which had almoſt ceaſed to harraſs her; but ſhe was able to bear it, and it rendered leſs painful the idea of quitting him for ever: he was, ſhe thought ſo metamorphoſed, that any regard for him in his preſent ſtate was inconſiſtent with the ſincere eſteem ſhe entertained for him while ſhe believed him what ſhe would have him be; and endeavouring to rouſe her indignation at his want of principle, and her contempt of his artful hypocriſy, ſhe perhaps too haſtily concluded her hatred of him ſincere.

The conflict was yet ſevere, though ſhe was firm, but her fortitude had not undergone it's laſt teſt: after breakfaſt ſhe was called down to the parlour to a perſon whom ſhe had ſent for to pay a ſmall bill to: this buſineſs was juſt diſpatched, the perſon was going, and both the houſe door and that of the parlour were open, when Lord Calorne entered the hall, and aſked if ſhe was within: the ſervant ſaid—Yes—and before Conſtance could muſter the leaſt particle of courage, his lordſhip was in the parlour:—ſhe turned pale, trembled from head to foot, and was ſilent:—the ſervant ſet chairs and quitted the room:—Lord Calorne began—I fear—I am very ſorry—pauſed, and appeared

peared almoſt equally embarraſſed.—Conſtance could no longer ſupport herſelf ſtanding, ſhe drop't into a chair, and he walked from her:—ſhe took the advantage of his back being towards her, to recall her ſcattered ſenſes, take out her handkerchief, and aſſume ſome degree of compoſure:—in a few ſeconds he ſeated himſelf oppoſite to her, and ſaid in a tone of calm ſeverity—I am afraid Miſs Fitzarthur, you think me very rude to trouble you with a viſit after you had given orders to be denied to me; but I will rather riſque any thing than forego the laſt ſatisfaction I expect from our acquaintance:—you have penetration enough to diſcern a change in my behaviour; you cannot, I am ſure be at a loſs for the cauſe, but I ſee you affect to reſent it.—I will not inquire which of us has the moſt reaſon to be offended; I am hurt at your conduct, yet I bear you no ill-will, and though I muſt reſign all the hopes I once cheriſhed, I will ſtill be your friend, and, with your permiſſion your adviſer.—What can have been the motive to your capricious change of conduct I cannot gueſs: you have ruined my peace, but I will not reproach you.

Lord Calorne might have gone on till midnight without any interruption from his auditor: he ſaw her countenance alter, and the tears ſtart in her eyes, as ſhe leaned with her hand under her cheek, and he ſtopped.

The agitation of her mind was now forced to find a remedy, and ſhe cried vehemently; he then, lowering his tone of voice, and comng to her as if diſarmed of his anger, tried to ſoothe her.—I cannot bear you ſhould be in tears, ſaid he, all ſhall be forgotten: perhaps I have been too blame, ſuffer me only to convince you of your danger, and every painful remembrance ſhall be obliterated.

Her ſpirit now roſe: whatever was the fact, ſhe would not encourage him to believe he could at pleaſure cauſe or remove her ſorrow, and angry at his attempts to conſole her, ſhe roſe, and turning from him, ſaid—I know not what your lordſhip means by your reproaches, unleſs it is to prevent mine: your language is unintelligible: but I can underſtand enough to warn me to expect the greateſt danger where I thought myſelf the moſt ſecure.—I ſee the precipice I ſtand on, and will immediately withdraw from it.—This, replied Lord Calorne is all I wiſh; you will then excite my admiration as much as you have done my pity: let all that has paſſed be buried in oblivion: and do not add to my many cauſes of vexation that of ſeeing you unhappy. I own I came here with a reſolution to take an eternal farewell of you, but I ſhall now —However eaſy, interrupted Conſtance, your lordſhip may find it to forget becauſe you do not chuſe to remember, it is an ability I cannot boaſt: the ſenſe of what has paſſed will, as long as I live, remain

main on my mind, and it is out of my power to cancel it: I am aſhamed, heartily aſhamed of a weakneſs which you have baſely taken advantage of.—You cannot ſay, returned he, that I have taken advantage of it: do not, my dear madam, let your ſorrow exceed its cauſe: I knew whatever might dictate for a moment, a very ſhort conſideration would act as it has done; but, he continued, taking her hand and ſmiling at her, you ſhall not go without puniſhment for what you have made me ſuffer. It is, Miſs Fitzarthur, in your power to make me ſuch an atonement as will annihilate your error, and ſuch an one as I ſhall think all that gratitude can do to expreſs obligation too little to acknowledge. The load on my heart is inſupportable; I have ten thouſand anxieties which you only can remove: the whole conſequence of my conduct I will take on myſelf, and can brave every misfortune excepting that of loſing you: will you conſent to marry me immediately.

Indignation at ſuch unparallelled effrontery came now to Miſs Fitzarthur's aid, and gave her the courage ſhe wanted: recovering her hand ſhe replied—Your lordſhip's opinion of me muſt be ſtill lower than ever, if you could promiſe yourſelf ſucceſs from a repetition of a propoſal I have, for ſuch good reaſons rejected: they were then ſuch as nothing could overcome, and they are ſtrengthened ten-fold now: that you may believe me ſincere, I will tell you I have heard of your connec-

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tion, and of your baſe deſign to impoſe on me and ſubject me to contempt and ridicule:—you muſt think me very much my own enemy if I can, after what I have learned, entertain a moment's wiſh for any farther intercourſe with you: the honour you once offered me is now an inſult; to ſay I do not feel it, would be pretending to a degree of fortitude which I have not; but I have enough to warrant my ſaying, that as I hope for mercy, none of your artful entreaties ſhall prevail on me: you have uſed me moſt contemptuouſly, and I am not ſo blinded as not to ſee it.—Good God! ſaid Lord Calorne, what do you mean? I deny that I ever wiſhed to impoſe on you—had you not ſhunned me, and refuſed to ſee me, you ſhould have known every particular of my ſituation, and to what extremities I am driven:—my connection, as you call it, I would before now have informed you of, and have many times reſolved to do it, but have always been deterred by an idea that, if your regard for me was ſuch as without preſumption I may ſay it ought to have been, you would be hurt at hearing of it; and credulouſly believing you had a very refined ſenſe of honour, I feared you would, while it exiſted ſtill refuſe me:—to ſpare what I then thought would be both to you and myſelf a very diſtreſſing ſcene, and hoping that I might be able to diſentangle myſelf, I was ſilent. But how ill, Miſs Fitzarthur, does this exceſſive reſentment become you!

you! how ill does it ſort with the encouragement, the very flattering encouragement you have given me, and with the ſentiments you have expreſſed! I muſt attribute your anger to my *not* having made uſe of the advantage you offered me; but ardently as I love you, I would rather bid you adieu for ever than violate the faith your family have in me—you are my friend's, my hoſpitable benefactor's daughter, and how could I ever dare to call him ſo had I perfidy enough to employ, as many would have done, the power you gave me?

And can you, ſaid Conſtance, almoſt choaked with contending paſſions, can you, baſe Lord Calorne, upbraid me with my affection for you?—can you pretend to deſpiſe me for it? or will you dare to ſay that any one of my actions was not warranted by the engagement between us?—had I conſented to the ſcandalous marriage you ſo urged, you might have blamed me: how could I then have borne your reproaches and thoſe of my conſcience? and what reaſon have I to thank Heaven that preſerved me from your ſnare! let me ſtand as a warning to the credulous:—all arts were uſed to engage my affection, and I am not only deſpiſed ſecretly for their ſucceſs, but openly upbraided with it.

The inconſiſtency of your conduct, replied Lord Calorne, aſtoniſhes me, and I know not what to reſolve on.—I love you—you know I do; all you do cannot prevent it: I would do any thing to preſerve

preſerve your peace of mind, tell me how ſhall I beſt do this?—By leaving me, ſhe anſwered; I ſcorn your hypocritical overtures, and pretended regard: you have given additional ſtrength to my reſolution, and enabled me to tell you this is the laſt time I ſhall ſee you.—I acknowledge, and make what advantage you can of it, that on your account I have ſuffered greatly—it has coſt me much pains to root out an affection which had its foundation in the ſincereſt eſteem; but I have done it, and ſhall quit London, and I hope all remembrance of your lordſhip, together: I have neither ſpirits nor time for farther uſeleſs altercation: I have ſome directions to give before I leave town, and I expect the carriage preſently. Saying theſe words, and fearing her own ability to ſtand a longer trial, ſhe was paſſing Lord Calorne, when he ſtopping her, aſked her if ſhe was really going.—Really, ſhe replied.—Whither? he aſked.—Home, ſhe anſwered, and as ſhe ſaid ſo, Lord Farnford's coach came to the door.—You are not going in that carriage? ſaid he; it is Lord Farnford's—you are not ſurely going with him?—It is not of any importance to your lordſhip, ſhe replied, again attempting to paſs him, how or with whom I am going.—It is of importance to me, he returned warmly; Miſs Fitzarthur you muſt not, you ſhall not go: you mean to puniſh me to the extreme—more than I can bear:—you muſt not leave me:—forgive what is paſt, as I do—do not go—I ſhall loſe every ſupport.—

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I will forgive you, anſwered Conſtance, tenderneſs for a moment predominating, but I muſt go, you have forced me to it, and I cannot, I will not retract.—Let me then follow you, ſaid Lord Calorne.—On no conſideration, ſhe replied, I will not ſee you if you do.—May I write to you? he aſked.—She anſwered—No.—This is injuſtice, ſaid he: ſuffer me to write to you and I will explain every thing,—I poſitively will not, ſhe returned: your lordſhip ſhall not find me through the whole of my character, the flexible dupe you have thought me: you may expect, if you chuſe to write to me, to have your letters returned unopened.

At this inſtant Conſtance was relieved by a meſſage from Lord Farnford and his ſiſters, telling her they waited for her, ſhe ſent word ſhe was coming immediately, and would have followed the ſervant; but Lord Calorne ſhutting the door, and ſetting his foot againſt it, ſaid—And you are really going, and forbid all communication between us? your reſentment in my opinion far exceeds the offence, and muſt have ſome other foundation; remember, Miſs Fitzarthur, we meet now for the laſt time; and let us take care that we have no cauſe to reproach ourſelves: can you, do you think, in your cooler moments juſtify to yourſelf the ſtep you are now about to take? can you think it proper to truſt to the protection of a man whom you have frequently declared unworthy of all confidence? you will repent

CON VOL I

THE Author from a conjunction of circumſtances, being neceſſitated to refer the correction of the preſs to a perſon, in the opinion of whoſe care ſhe was deceived, thinks herſelf obliged to apologize for the errors that have crept into the work. She therefore begs her readers to accept her excuſe and apply to the errata prefixed to each volume.

ERRATA. VOL. I.

Preface for *inoxious* r. *innoxious*, *ingenuous* r. *ingenious*, P. 8, l. 18, for *this* r. *his*, p. 18, l. 18, dele *of*, p. 24, l. 12, for *was* r. *were*, p. 42, l. 7, after *thoſe* inſert *might make*, p. 65, l. 27, for *a* read *no*, p. 78, l. 14, for *was* r. *were*, l. 23, for *overgrown* r. *outgrown*, p. 82, l. 17, after *be* inſert *too*, p. 94, l. 15, for *time* read *price*, p. 99, l. 7, dele *in*, p. 105, l. 12, for *meridian* r. *meridiem*, p. 122, l. 20, for *ſhe* r. *he*, p. 129, l. 24, for *convey* r. *convoy*, p. 131, l. 12, for *was* r. *were*, p. 170, l. 27, after *then* inſert *to*, p. 172, l. 17, dele *of*, p. 201, laſt l. for *ſat* r. *ſet*, p. 214, l. 10, for *a*, r. *her*, p. 215, l. 11, for *at* r. *in*, p. 237, l. 11, for *preſentment* r. *preſentiment*, p. 238, l. 15, for *as* read *and*, l. 21, for *ſuſpiciouſly* r. *particularly*, p. 251, l. 28, *for what* r. *as ſcrupulouſly*, l. 29, after *doubt*, inſert *what*, p. 262, l. 7, for *as* r. *one*, p. 263, l. 2, for *cloſely* r. *ſlowly*, p. 276, l. 1. for *famliar* r. *uſual*.

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pent it, believe me:—let me intreat you not to go; or, if you will go, not to go with *him*.— Whatever Lord Farnford may be, ſhe replied, he has no hypocriſy: I will venture.—Then I know the cauſe of your ſeverity to me, ſaid Lord Calorne:—you threatned me, and you have carried your threat into execution;—but remember the promiſe you have given me— you are mine, you cannot give yourſelf to another.—I cannot ſtay, Conſtance anſwered, to hear your reproaches.—Then go, rejoined his Lordſhip: all I aſk is one hour's reflection on your conduct towards me when you arrive at Marſtonbury—you will then, perhaps, think you have uſed me very ill.

The converſation ended before either of the parties was aware that they perfectly miſunderſtood each other: her heart was too full for reply, and ſhe was ſcarcely herſelf, when Lord Farnford came in to fetch her: he addreſſed Lord Calorne with an air of ſaucy triumph, and very familiarly urged her to get ready: ſhe made a painful effort, went out of the room, and heard Lord Calorne go away inſtantly. To avoid the inquiries of curioſity, which her appearance would have excited, ſhe went to her chamber and endeavoured to compoſe her features, but this was not eaſily to be done; and obliged to yield to the commotions within, which were occaſioned by various militating paſſions, ſhe ſat down and cried; after which regale ſhe gave ſome incoherent orders to her maid, and then went

to the company, who ſhe ſoon found were appriſed of the viſitor ſhe had had.

Her aunt, when ſhe had bid her adieu, ſtrongly invited her to a ſecond reſidence with her, to which Conſtance could return no other anſwer than thanks and tears: ſhe repented too ſincerely having ever quitted her native home to engage to do ſo again, and though ſhe was far from concluding the world in general bad, ſhe could not think an acquaintance with it deſirable, nor, that the having gained experience was ſo advantageous, as the having been deceived, was cruel.

Hope had beckoned her, curioſity had impelled her, and peace had accompanied her to London: ſhe was now chaſed from it by deſpair and diſappointment, and the place of her fair tutelary was uſurped by the jarring trio, regret, ſorrow and diſcontent; inſtead of the tranquil, elaſtic, bounding heart, ſhe had brought with her, ſhe carried back one made flaccid by ſenſibility, irritated by conflict, and almoſt ſevered in attaining a branch of knowledge which ſhewould gladly have been without, and the conviction that there is no form which vice cannot aſſume for the purpoſe of deception, no reliance to be placed on external appearances of virtue.

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END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.